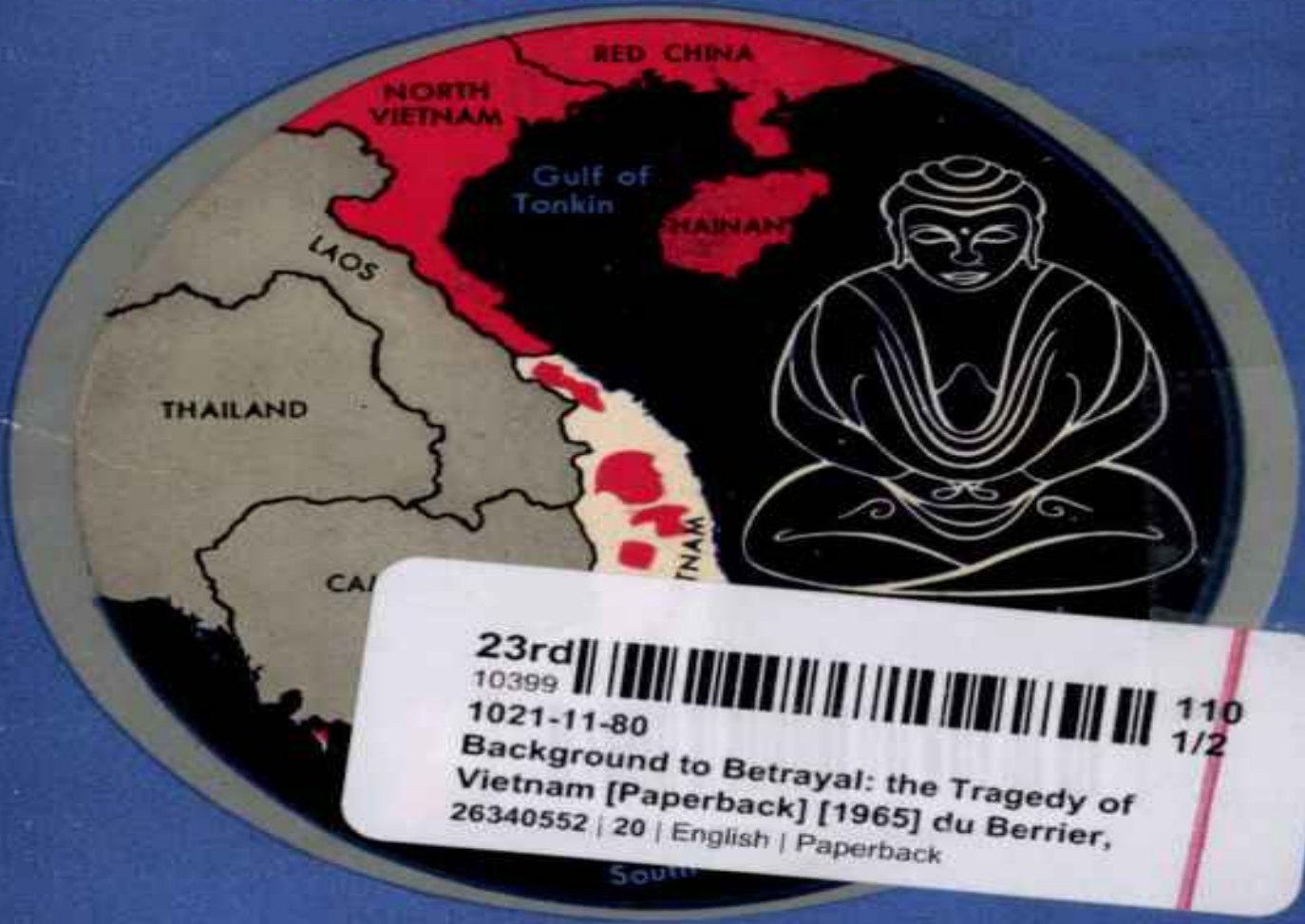
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BACKGROUND TO BETRAYAL

THE TRAGEDY OF VIETNAM

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"Not yet, O Freedom! close thy lids in slumber, for thine enemy never sleeps.’’

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INTRODUCTION

At the time this book is being published, the heated words of dispute over what is really happening in Vietnam have soared into a conflagration. Everybody from Suzanne Labin and Senator Dodd to Henry Cabot Lodge and Maxwell Taylor has versions to give you of who is doing what to

whom, and why and for what purpose. And in some of these versions, anyway, any resemblance to the truth is purely coincidental.

This book, however, is not concerned primarily with the present tragedy in Vietnam. Its subtitle is "the tragedy of Vietnam," which indicates a far longer perspective. The carefully stage-managed horror now being acted out in that unhappy country is of great interest because of the undisclosed purposes for which this fraud is being perpetrated and prolonged. But this volume is history, not conjecture. It was the destruction and demoralization of anti-Communist groups and leaders in South Vietnam, already carried out by the end of the Eisenhower administration through the regime it had imposed on the Vietnamese people, to which the current confusion is but an epilogue. And regardless of whatever whole new tragedy this confusion may be intended to serve in turn as a prologue, the author of this book is simply attempting to make clear the background to the total betrayal.

It is apparent, to anybody who will study all of the antics on this stage with prerequisite knowledge and objective vision, that Communist influences are pulling strings and determining actions on both sides, exactly as we now know to have been the case in the Korean War. And it is entirely possible that a repetition of that sham, on a far more extensive scale and with far more serious aspects and results, might be in the making.

A war between ourselves and the Chinese Communists, in and supposedly over Vietnam, exactly as took place in Korea, would enable leftwing influences in the present administration, and their Soviet allies, to make even more effective use, than has been achieved so far, of the highly publicized but wholly

fictitious feud between Red Russia and Red China. As in World War II, the Soviets would again become our "noble allies." The rapprochement between our government and the Soviet government could be made visibly far greater, and in detailed practical effect far more extensive than it is today. And the regimentation that could be imposed on the American people, by an administration which has already shown itself to be hell-bent for tyranny, with this war against Red China as the excuse, would make the government controls of World War II look like a study in free enterprise and personal liberty.

When Communist-led students and Communist front groups parade and picket against our remaining in Vietnam, right while the actual results of our staying there continue to be so damaging to any residue of real anti-

Communist strength in that country, you can be sure that the plotters activating these poor misguided puppets are seeking to support the belief, of the even more misguided American people, that we really are trying to save Vietnam from Communism—and are willing to use force to do so. This psychological build-up of a willingness on the part of the American people to accept a state of war against the Red Chinese is just one of a great many straws in the wind, indicating that such a phonily controlled, playacting, but horribly cruel war, may be blowing towards us.

But this book is not written nor published because of, nor is it in any way based on, any such hypothesis, or possibility. Its purpose is merely to make available to the American people a knowledge of what has gone before; a knowledge of the situation that has gradually been created in Indochina by agencies of our government and the Communists working together, ever since we put Ho Chi Minh in business with our money and equipment in 1944. This is so that whatever use is made of that situation in the future, the new developments can be well enough understood by enough of our fellow citizens to keep those developments from being quite so disastrous to our country.

Robert Welch

At the end of the eighteenth century the Nguyen dynasty reigned over Southern Annam, which lay to the South of China. Tonkin, the province to the north of Annam and bordering on China proper (see maps in center section), had been retaken from China and Nguyen power appeared supreme, when a merciless revolt shook the land. The Nguyens were swept away, and chaos succeeded them.

In France the first consul, Napoleon Bonaparte, was restoring order to a tortured country and, in a great burst of energy, Frenchmen sailed far and wide over the world. It was in 1801 that one of these leagued with a descendant of the Nguyens and helped to bring Annam, the middle country, Tonkin to the north, and Cochin China to the south, once more under Nguyen rule. The Empire of Annam was born, and France made her entry into the world that was to become known as Indochina.

In 1858 a French naval force on its way home from a joint Franco-British expedition against China put in at a port about half way up the east coast which the French commander, Rigault de Genouilly, called Tourane and which the Americans now know as Da Nang. From there the French sailed south and occupied Saigon.

Four years later, in 1862, the Emperor Tu Due granted France a foothold on the east coast of his southern province, Cochin China, and with it ceded the island of Poulo Condore, noted today for its prison.

The following year, in 1863, King Norodom of Cambodia placed himself under the protection of France. Then came 1866, the year of Francis Garnier's great exploration of the Mekong River in search of a commercial route to the southern provinces of China. In 1867 the west coast of Cochin China was ceded to France. Six years later a minor incident led to fighting and Francis Garnier occupied Hanoi to restore order. Garnier was killed but the protectorate he established over the northern province of Tonkin remained. Garnier's successor was in turn killed in 1882. The following year war broke out with China. French forces debarqued at Haiphong, defeated

the Chinese in a year of fighting and in 1885 signed the Treaty of Tientsin out of which, two years later, France's Indochina Union came into being. On the east coast lay Vietnam, or the Empire ot Annam as it was also called. Landlocked Laos bordered Vietnam on the west. South of Laos and wedged between Siam and Vietnam was Cambodia.

Gradually Laos and the kingdom of Cambodia were added to the protectorate which the French established. By 1884 the three lands were known as French Indochina.

Three kingdoms had previously existed in Laos. The Kingdom of Luangprabang was an ally of Siam. Vientiane was a vassal of Annam, and the kings of Champassak were vassals of the powerful rulers of Luangprabang until Siam invaded the country early in the nineteenth century. Vientiane power was destroyed by the Siamese, and thereafter the rulers of Luangprabang reigned supreme. Under the French protectorate France replaced Siam in the affairs of Laos, and the implantation of French culture continued unhindered in Indochina until 1940, when Japan wrung permission from Admiral Decoux, the French governor-general, to send in troops, supposedly to see that material was not being transported to Chinese forces over the French railway to the north.

Admiral Decoux resisted as long as he could, but his position was hopeless. He was cut off from France, his aviation was non-existent, and his forces had ammunition for only a day and a half of fighting. Neither Britain nor America was prepared to come to his aid.

Cordell Hull was America's secretary of state at the time. French ambassador St. Quentin asked, in Washington, "Shall we resist?"

"If I were you I would yield," Mr. Hull replied.

According to Mr. Charles Bohlen's minutes of the CairoTeheran papers, it was by a secret agreement between President Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin on December 1, 1943, that France's premature elimination from Southeast Asia and the sowing of wars to come were effected. Franklin D. Roosevelt, we are told bjt Mr. Bohlen, "was 100% in agreement [at Teheran] with Marshal Stalin that France should not get back Indochina."

The war that France fought to retain Indochina within the French Community and free from communism terminated on May 7, 1954, with the fall of the fortified position of Dien Bien Phu, after five months of heroic resistance.

Communist members of the French National Assembly rose

to their feet and applauded when the assembly was informed that Dien Bien Phu had fallen.

It was established that a one-hour strike by American planes could have saved the beleaguered garrison and changed the course of history. On five separate occasions such a strike was discussed, but each time reasons were found to rule out American rescue from the air.

The first such proposal came on March 25, 1954, when Admiral Arthur W. Radford, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and France's General Ely talked of a limited tactical air strike against the Vietminh, in view of the appearance of Chinese heavy artillery and anti-aircraft batteries at Dien Bien Phu. Admiral Radford favored the strike. Chances of its leading to massive Chinese intervention were considered nil. Rather, it was believed that American determination would discourage Peking from further adventures. Congress presumably at the request of John Foster Dulles, the U. S. secretary of state, vetoed the proposal.

By April 2 the situation at Dien Bien Phu was becoming desperate. Dulles' reaction was to call French Ambassador Henri Bonnet for a one-hour talk and outline a nebulous, timeconsuming and probably unfeasible plan for joint action by America, Australia, New Zealand and Britain. Paris saw it as a prelude to internationalization of the conflict, without any assurance that an anti-Communist victory was Mr. Dulles' aim.

On April 23 Mr. Dulles was in Paris, preparing for the forthcoming Geneva conference. Georges Bidault of France showed him an urgent message from General Henri Navarre, stating that only immediate, massive American air support could save the garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Mr. Dulles replied that no such support was possible without a preliminary political agreement with the other powers having vital interests in Southeast Asia, particularly Great Britain. This time Britain refused to co-operate.

Dien Bien Phu fell on May 7. Less than two weeks earlier the conference had opened in Geneva. French Premier Lamel asked U. S. Ambassador Dillon what the attitude of America would be if an honorable peace could not be obtained or if, before the end of the conference, the military situation should deteriorate further. Ambassador Bonnet had instructions to put the same question before the Department of State.

Principal points of the American reply, delivered on May 15, were not encouraging. France must formally demand American intervention. Britain, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and

New Zealand must receive the same request. Any intervention that might follow must be under the United Nations. France must openly declare the three states of Indochina independent, even to permitting their secession from the French Community, if they wished. Manifestly Washington was playing for time.

The fifth and last attempt to enlist American support came on May 24, when Foreign Minister Bidault appealed to General Walter Bedell Smith, then U. S. undersecretary of state. Smith held out some encouragement. Not only was eventual air support possible, said he, but American marines could be moved into Indochina without it constituting an act of war, according to the Constitution, or necessitating congressional approval.

For several weeks the Laniel government clung to this final hope. In the end even such support as Lebanon obtained in three days in 1958 was refused. Allegedly a small group headed by Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson and the generals Ridgeway and Twining, and supported by the senators who had consistently worked to block a French victory, was responsible for Washington’s final reply, a modified version of the conditions specified on May 15.

Deprived of American support, the Laniel government fell and Pierre Mendes-France, the socialist, rose to conclude the treaty by which Tonkin

and that part of Annam above the 17th parallel were given to Ho chi Minh, the Communist. Annam below the 17th parallel and all of Cochin China were to be evacuated by the Communists until a referendum, set for 1956, might decide under which section—north or south—the country would be re-united.

Thus, by a circuitous route and at the cost of 170,000 casualties, French and native, the Roosevelt-Stalin accord of December 1, 1943, was fulfilled and the story of so-called "free Vietnam" began.

Said Mr. Dulles, "A year will be enough for us to train the South Vietnamese government and army to take over and be on their own."

Hilaire du Berrier

* * *

Note: Readers are urged to refer to the appendix section at the rear of this volume. It is believed that the information contained there will be an aid to understanding the story of Vietnam.

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Americans had no say in what was done in their name in South Vietnam.

A small, firmly-knit group succeeded in making South Vietnam the proving-ground for their ideas, which millions of Vietnamese will expiate in chains and for which all Americans will stand accused before History.

CHAPTER ONE
VIETNAM

Vietnam is “the land to the south,” which is to say the land to the south of China, where the center of the universe was said to be. A rich patina of story hangs over Vietnam’s steaming jungles and spongy swamps. Strange tribes live in the high central plateau to the north. In neighboring Cambodia existed the ancient empire of the Khmers, builders of the sacred city of Angkor Wat, around which, so the natives say, the forest is traversed by phantom armies led by weeping queens on shadowy elephants.

Above the 17th parallel is North Vietnam, the state of Communist Ho chi Minh, whose followers call themselves Vietminh, “light of the land.” There are approximately 60,900 square miles to Ho chi Minh’s country with a population of some 16,200,000.

South Vietnam, the land below the 17th parallel, has an area of roughly 66,350 square miles and a population between 15,000,000 and 15,500,000. The reunification of these two Vietnams, under the East’s concept or ours, is the objective that has made South Vietnam a battlefield. In this struggle, as

regards communism America's role was defensive, the role of reaction, never initiative. Only in advancing the leader of our choice were we aggressive. America staked her own prestige and Southeast Asia's future on Ngo dinh Diem, an unknown ascetic of strange moods and violent rages. It was from a faceless group in Washington with international ramifications, not from his countrymen, that he received his mandate.

Our study of this struggle begins in the spring of 1954 in Geneva, Switzerland. France had lost the costly battle of Dien Bien Phu and the Laniel government was groping for a way to extricate itself from an unpopular war, though it meant the end of a hundred years of occupation and the markets on which a sector of the French economy existed.

Much drivel has been written about the Communist victory at Dien Bien Phu. For eight years Americans interested in foisting Ngo dinh Diem on his countrymen and the American

puhUc, for reasons known only to themselves, held up the Washington-imposed puppet as a miracle worker. "None of the experts gave him a chance against the army that had defeated the French," was the line parrotted by Angier Biddle Duke, who headed American Friends of Vietnam, the propaganda front set up to circumvent the Foreign Agents Registration Law. What experts? Angier Biddle Duke? Public relations huckster Harold Oram? Joseph Buttinger, the Austrian socialist? Lieutenant General "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, who left the U. S. army to help sell Diem in America? Wesley Fishel, who mdoctnnated the students of Michigan State University with the Diem hoax and called it education?

The real experts knew that the French debacle in Indochina was no proof of Communist Vietminh invincibility American labor leaders through their connections with the french unions and French socialists knew that Socialist leader Pierre Mendes-France's personal representative (who was high commissioner in Indochina by appointment of Premier Lamel) was in contact with the enemy, ironing out their peace terms for a year and a half while the French army was fighting General Henri Navarre, the French commander, knew that the batde of Dien Bien Phu was lost the day it became known that the Lamel government had agreed to a conference in Geneva. From that moment all the force Ho chi Minh could muster was thrown into a frontal attack on Dien Bien Phu m order to gain a psychological victory to exploit at the conlerence table.

It was a Pyrrhic victory. Ho had no army with which to occupy Laos, seize Cambodia and threaten South Vietnam when it was over. It would have taken four years to rebuild me army he had lost. But the West was never told this, for the French left wished to justify surrender and the American left wished to portray Diem, the labor leader's brother, as the miracle man before whom victorious communism on the march had lost confidence and halted.

The French regarded their sacrifices in Indochina as a standard-bearing struggle for Western civilization, as did the Americans in Korea. The Communist world and its sympattuzers depicted it as a rear-guard action to preserve colonialism and nothing more. Naturally the conference arranged in Geneva was weighted from the first against the French. Britain, France, Communist China and Russia gathered around the table with toe Umted States looking on. Over toe shoulders or China mid Russia peered Communist Ho chi Minh's Foreign Minister, Pham van Dong. ^

Anthony Eden represented Britain's pivotal position, bridg

ing East and West in the center of the see-saw. He alone had a representative in Peking and his country traded on a large scale with Russia. No one could accuse him of supporting either Mao Tse-tung or Bao Dai, the Vietnamese ruler whose country was on the operating table.

Molotov spoke for Russia, Chou En-lai for Red China, Foreign Minister Georges Bidault for France, and Pham van Dong for Ho chi Minh. Secretary of State Dulles flew in, stayed for a few days and departed, leaving General Bedell Smith as his observer. Bao Dai, the emperor of Vietnam and chief of state, accompanied by his cousin, Prince Buu Loc, the prime minister, sat in the Vemiaz Hotel in Evian, powerless to affect history in one way or the other while their affairs of state were being settled.

As one by one the countries concerned took up their positions around the conference table in Geneva, the situation looked something like this: Molotov, when he bothered to be civil, did so for reasons of propaganda. He wanted a peace that would permit the infiltration of soldiers without uniform, political agents of the Vietminh, into areas still occupied by the French, a peace that would permit a gradual dilution and eventual elimination of everything representing the Occident from Southeast Asia.

Chou En-lai was not satisfied with a Communist triumph. His aim was the yellowing of the rest of Asia by complete elimination of the white man.

Time was working for him. He and Ho chi Minh could afford to be patient. Unlike Eden and Bidault and Bedell Smith, they did not have to reckon with public opinion. Whether peace came or not was all the same to them; they had only to await a more favorable time and reopen hostilities.

Pham van Dong, the lieutenant and spokesman of Ho chi Minh, was flanked by Molotov and Chou. The Chinese were the theoreticians of the bloc, the most insulting, the most unyielding, but it was to the Russians that Dong was deferential.

Eden stoutly denied charges of neutralism but his thinking was, nevertheless, along traditional British mercantile lines, namely that it was better to sacrifice half of Indochina than risk any loss for England. He felt that communism should be stopped, but Indochina was neither the place nor the time. Better to wait till Hong Kong or Malaya or Singapore were threatened. In his pocket, as he negotiated, was a telegram from Nehru telling him to do anything as long as it meant peace.

No one knew where America stood. Monsieur Bidault com

plained that lack of American support prevented his sowing discord between the Chinese and the Russians.

Dien Bien Phu had fallen on May 7, 1954, after a heroic resistance.

On May 11, at 10:30 a. m., Mr. Dulles held a Washington press conference. He had just returned from Geneva. He had no statement to make, but he was ready to answer questions. Daniel Schorr of CBS asked if Southeast Asia could be defended if Indochina fell. Mr. Dulles replied, “I believe so.”

A murmur went through the room. Another voice asked, Mr. Secretary, do you regard Laos and Cambodia as necessary for the defense of Southeast Asia?”

“They are important,” replied Mr. Dulles, “but not essential.”

To Monsieur Bidault, informed of the Dulles statements while still at the conference table, they had the effect of a knife between the shoulder blades. Notice had been served that come what might, America would not intervene. Behind Bidault the support of a war-weary France dropped alarmingly. Britain knew, France knew, and the negotiating Reds knew that the game was over. Admiral Radford was more than disappointed; he had previously stated that if Indochina fell the sole remaining line for the defense of the Southeast Asia peninsula would run from the Kra Isthmus across Malaya, a continental line which the British had held for three days

against the Japanese and which President Eisenhower had described as "barely defendable."

Mr. Dulles' statements before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations a few days later were equally conducive to disaster for the West. He said, "The United States can intervene in Indochina only through the United Nations." It was the Red bloc's green light.

Bidault wanted peace, but not at any price. His reproach to the United States was not for having refused intervention but for letting the belligerent Reds, a wavering Eden, and Bidault's political enemies in France, know that he could expect no support from America—and this at the moment when he was fighting with his back to the wall. A few days later the Laniel government, in which Bidault was minister of foreign affairs, fell, to be followed by the government of Pierre Mendes-France, the socialist.

It was Premier Mendes-France who terminated the long drawn out conference at Geneva giving Ho chi Minh the area of Vietnam north of the 17th parallel. Bao Dai was given the area to the south and a promise of a referendum in 1956 for

the reunification of the country. As the date for that referendum approached, the American press, essentially pro-MendesFrance but anti-French (see for example the article by Joseph Buttinger in the special issue of the New Leader dated June 27, 1955), reproached France for having sold out Vietnam at Geneva. Ignored was the fact that the final terms of the Geneva accord of 1954 were the work of Mendes-France and of him alone, and were terms that had much to do with France's repudiation of Mendes-France eighteen months later.

Mendes-France's toppling of the Laniel government on June 18 was accomplished by a cunning combination of anti-Americanism and leftist demagoguery: He charged that Monsieur Bidault had tried to bring about an American intervention that would have started another world war. On assuming the premiership his first act was to quash an indictment against the heavily Commumst-infiltrated Observateur for leaking military information to the Vietminh. Outstanding on the Observateur's editorial staff was Daniel Guerin, who later organized the "anti-fascist" committees within the French army for the purpose of filing and pushing reports made by Communist-trained draftees against their officers. (Guerin wrote the book The Popular Front.) Such was Pierre Mendes-France, the Socialist whose lectures were to become the gospel on European affairs at America's

Brandeis University. When the French Surete raided Guerin's Paris apartment early one morning in the winter of 1956, a Brandeis University professor was there.

America's replacement of France in Southeast Asia dates officially from Mendes-France's granting of complete independence in 1954 to the French Union, which is roughly parallel to the British Commonwealth. It was no secret that international forces described as "liberal" had worked ceaselessly toward the destruction of France's empire since the early years of World War II. A significant paragraph in General Eisenhower's Crusade in Europe deals with President Roosevelt's trip to Egypt prior to the invasion of Europe. Ike complained that the president showed no interest in the problems confronting Operation Overlord, the invasion of Europe, his mind being entirely occupied with plans for France's colonies and his determination that they should not return to their pre-war status. There were no few men around the president, from State Department's information section to his closest advisors, to feed constantly that determination and to advance to key positions Americans who would further such a policy. Whether the policy favored the advancement

of communism by chance or was designed to that end is something no congressional committee is ever likely to make clear.

Our first Indochina policy was only a general one existing in the minds of a few well-placed men. It lasted from 1940 to the end of World War II and aimed at the elimination of French influence. There was no opposition to it, for the policy was never openly declared. It was the period of great friendship with Russia and an almost childish dream of a Jean Jacques Rousseau post-war world wherein, by simply driving out the colonialists, the little people of Africa and Asia would revert to "their original, good, and peaceful states."

The second American policy in Indochina lasted from 1945 to a date that is hard to establish because it did not end abruptly; it embarrassedly tiptoed out. We might set it as 1951. It was a continuation and natural development of the first and marked the period of our active support of Ho chi Minh. Ho, educated in Moscow's Orient University, had been sent to China in 1925 with Borodin, the agent charged with the communization of China. Ho was arrested in Hong Kong in 1931 and was later expelled as

head of the bureau of the third international, which was entrusted with the preparation of Communist revolutions in Southeast Asia.

After V-J Day French resistance groups whose members had risked their lives to aid Americans and rescue downed pilots in Indochina (against the explicit orders of the British, under whose command they were *) were pushed aside with a hasty sowing of freedom medals, and overnight American political and military support was thrown behind Ho chi Minh.

Any American who warned against the possible results of such a policy, or who expressed forebodings based on long Far East experience and knowledge of the personalities we were using and supporting, was ruthlessly dropped if in American employ and blacklisted if he were not, on charges that he was "working against America." As those attempting to warn America saw it, the picture looked something like this:

Ho chi Minh had returned to Indochina after V-J Day (August 15, 1945) with an elastic timetable but two inflexible goals. First, he was to beguile us into helping him drive out the French. With Indochina in his hands the communization of Southeast Asia would be simple. In 1941 the Chinese

* Britain, looking ahead to the post-war period when France would again be a commercial rival, wished to prevent France from having any claim to American gratitude. Franco-American cooperation in the Far East could be an obstacle to British policies and commerce.

southern commander, Chang Fa-kwei, had recognized Ho chi Minh as head of a "government in exile" in Luchow, on Chinese soil, where Ho had taken refuge. Chang Fa-kwei had his eyes on the rich provinces of Kwangsi, Yunnan and Kwangtung as possible fiefs for himself. He counted on Ho to drive out the French after American arms had eliminated the Japanese; then he would suppress Ho and spread a sort of war lord control southward over Tonkin. As we shall see later, on behalf of the U. S., General George C. Marshall was willing to agree to this if the Chinese nationalist government at Nanking would accept Mao and Chou.

Within three years of its founding, Ho's shadow government in Luchow was enjoying full diplomatic status and receiving a stream of American arms. In return for this, OSS agents were being fed reports of prodigious feats against the Japanese. Actually there was only one instance on record of any friction between the Vietminh and the Japanese—an incident in an isolated village where eight Japanese were killed. After V-J Day it was to

Ho and his American-equipped forces that the Japanese surrendered more arms, well aware of the trouble it would cause Japan's enemies, the Americans and the Chinese and the French.

Ho made good use of his Moscow training. Conscious of the importance of his first impression on the allied missions entering Indochina, he held his troops in check. They were well disciplined, spreading out in an orderly manner while political agents worked on Vietnamese nationalists and Western allies alike.

Vietnamese anti-Communists were assured by Ho that everything would be all right. He had the Americans behind him and would form a national government in which all parties would be represented as soon as the French were ousted.

"But," he insisted to the Vietnamese, "it is important that you recognize me as the leader of the united nationalist front. I have to play down your importance because the Americans are not satisfied with the passive role you played in the war against the Japanese. If you start asserting yourselves and challenging my authority, the Americans will support the French."

It is hardly likely that all of the Americans taken in by Ho's agents were loyal, well-meaning dupes. Mr. Harold R. Isaacs, the Newsweek correspondent whose articles of that period glorified Ho as a native George Washington, could not have been completely fooled. Mr. Isaacs had been a journalist in Shanghai in 1931 and 1932 at the time when

Ho was expelled from Hong Kong for his revolutionary work as head of the Southeast Asia bureau of the Communist third international. That was the Shanghai period of American Communist Eugene Dennis and the master German Communist spy, Richard Sorge. Mr. George Sheldon, the OSS officer who returned to Saigon to continue his support of Ho chi Minh from a desk in the U. S. embassy, must have worked with his eyes open, both as an American vice-consul then and later as an International Co-operation Administration official in Saigon.

Le Xuan, the Vietnamese boy who worked as General Phillip Gallagher's interpreter and who, after V-J Day, hitchhiked a ride to Shanghai in the general's plane to stir up a revolt of Annamite troops in the French garrison, could never deny his culpability if confronted with the details of his machinations of that period. Down and out in Paris in 1956,

Le Xuan offered a report of his nine years in the employ of American intelligence to both the Russians and the British. The French already had it. In this detailed account, Le Xuan named his American contacts, particularly blaming Major Batty and Professor Knapp, both OSS officers, for "tricking" him into being a spy for the Americans, then dropping him without money after nine years of what Le Xuan termed "loyal services."

This Le Xuan report has particular interest. He told how, when it came time for the Americans to leave Indochina they took him to Bangkok with them "because the French would kill him if he stayed behind." He stated that at the request of the Americans he helped organize the VietnamAmerican Friendship Association, behind which Ho chi Minh's supporters operated from Bangkok, Thailand. Le Xuan continued that work. In Bangkok he was supplied with a camera and a press card from Siam Rath News Agency as a blind, and was then sent on missions to Hamburg, Geneva and Spain. This, it must be borne in mind, was during the period when American liberals were working to undermine the Franco government. (In mid-1959 Le Xuan was reported to be employed again by the American army, giving aptitude tests in Paris.)

Whatever part Le Xuan played in organizing the friendship association mentioned, there is evidence of extremely efficient Communist direction behind the apparently guileless natives and cause-hungry Americans who were taken in by it. The friendship association spread to America, and was incorporated in the State of New York as a non-profit organization

on June 28, 1946, with headquarters at 796 Ninth Avenue, New York City, in an apartment rented by one Andre Pham. Little investigation was done about Pham in our postwar enthusiasm for "oppressed" peoples. In 1944 Paul de Wasch of 256 West 52 Street posted a $500 bond for Mr. Pham and Nathan Sinkman acted as his attorney. That was all that was known. Pham's group published a propaganda organ known as the Vietnamese Bulletin, which was printed by Fred Lurch on West 52 Street. The line of communications between Pham and his principals ran through a Vietnam center at 543 Sylom Road, Bangkok, a Vietnamese on Pacific Avenue in San Francisco, and the Indian consul-general in Saigon.

Among the members and sympathizers of the association we find such names as Robert Delson, editor of the Socialist Call and lawyer for the Worker's Defense League; Richard J. Walsh, Harold R. Isaacs, Norman

Thomas, Virginia T. Adloff, Anthony Vangly, Clara dayman, Pearl Buck, J. J. Singh, Roger Baldwin of American Civil Liberties Union; and Mr. George Sheldon, the OSS officer who returned to Saigon as an American vice-consul and whose report on Indochina appeared in the Far Eastern Survey, of The Institute of Pacific Relations, on December 18, 1946. Miss Maud Russel, connected with a group describing itself as For a Democratic Far Eastern Policy, was on the subscription list of Pham's bulletin. The full list of those connected with our 1946 meddling—which was as misguided as our 1954 meddling with the internal politics of this region—would make an interesting history, as would the list of sympathizers attending the Vietnam friendship organization's dinner at New York's Hotel McAlpin in 1948, and the speeches these sympathizers made.

The Korean War brought to the American in the street, and at a painful price, sudden realization of where he was being taken. Without a ripple the Vietnam-American Friendship Association faded from sight, its activators sliding unobtrusively into other fronts, entrenching themselves in the overlapping folds of our ponderous and intrigue-ridden aid agencies, or in the overstaffed ranks of our foreign service and intelligence agencies. Robert Delson was to turn up a decade later as legal counsel for the American Committee on Africa, the chaotic continent where the officials responsible for our debacle in Indochina were, by coincidence or otherwise, appearing as consuls and ambassadors.

Disillusionment with Ho chi Minh was never openly admitted. The Ho camp in America simply folded its tent like the Arabs and silently stole away to another camping ground

when the North Koreans started rolling southward. Overnight Indochina became a second front, potentially capable of tying down Communist Chinese forces who might otherwise be deployed against United Nations troops in Korea. A feverishly active third period of American policy was ushered in. Military, diplomatic, and economic missions were rushed to the embattled French, who were being pressed by the enemy America had armed in 1945 and supported ever since. But our officials made no pretense of pointing out the Communist menace to the young Vietnamese intellectuals they had told to refuse all co-operation with the French until given complete and immediate independence. MacArthur fought

communism, but colonialism was the enemy our State Department was fighting. A firm, centralized French command was necessary to the prosecution of the war, but we merely went through the motions of supporting it.

Policy number three was, superficially at least, a volte face from policies one and two, but General Philip Gallagher was never reproached for having broadcast over Ho chi Minh's radio in 1946. He was transferred to, of all places, Orleans, France.

It must also be remembered that the Americans who had been thrown out of government service for opposing policy number two, and whom time had proved right, were never taken off the blacklist. They were never given another government job. But the men who had supported Ho chi Minh and ousted every loyal American counseling against it, remained where they were. They were the ones charged with implementing the new policy, which was in direct contradiction to everything they had worked tirelessly and ruthlessly to achieve. It was to them that any military and political missions charged with co-operation with the French were sent for guidance and expert advice." How enthusiastically the old team followed their new orders is open to question.

A parallel fact is worth noting. Loud and vociferous complaints rose from the American left against this third policy of support for the French against Ho chi Minh. A group of professors, an Austrian socialist leader and naturalized American, a State Department "specialist on Indochina" who had never lived there, the political tacticians of labor, and muddled-thinkers by the score opposed our official policy in speech and print. None was accused of "working against America," or otherwise threatened.

The extent to which official sabotage of policy number three and protection of its detractors extended may be deduced from

a conversation Monsieur Jean Letourneau, the French minister for overseas affairs, had with an official high in our government, on one of Monsieur Letourneau's trips to Washington. Said the official, whose name Monsieur Letourneau would not divulge in mid-1959 because the man was still in our government, "I will not hide the fact from you that I and an important number of my colleagues desire to see a Ho chi Minh victory in Indochina and we will do all in our power to achieve that end."

Policy number three continued until the end of the Korean War. America was then no longer involved in Far East fighting. The Korean settlement in 1953 removed all but theoretical American interest in prolonging the war in Indochina or maintaining the French. Slowly but inevitably, from the moment a diversionary war in the south ceased to be necessary to draw Red Chinese arms and manpower from the Korean front, American interest in France-versus-communism waned. It had a last rally on its death-bed, inspired partly by the gallant defense of Dien Bien Phu and partly by a sudden and grim public realization that a Red victory might set unpredictable events into motion. But it was not enough to lead us beyond sympathy, weapons and money. The French expeditionary force did the dying. For many who survived, a grave was already being prepared in Algeria by the same men and groups who had advised and armed Ho chi Minh in Indochina.

The fourth and final phase of our policy in what had been known as Indochina was a natural consequence of policies one, two, and three. It can be described as America's experiment with the cult of the personality, the picking of a man and the backing of that man against his country rather than the country against communism. General O'Daniel may be regarded as the principal military exponent of this policy. Numerous senators and State Department officials advanced it on the political level. Since the brother of the man on whom America's hopes were placed and prestige risked was a labor leader in Saigon, American labor and its allies of the international socialist left reached out to practice diplomacy and a form of international politics of their own.

Under this fourth period of American policy in South Vietnam, the same solid front of support appeared that had protected Ho chi Minh in 1945 and 1946. A new propaganda front organization, The American Friends of Vietnam, sprang up where the old pro-Ho Vietnam-American Friendship Association had been. A loyal American could no longer write

an honest report on anything that our activists in Vietnam were doing without fear of retaliation. Reports unfavorable to the man America was backing were not judged, statement by statement, on a scale of truth or untruth. They were rejected outright and their authors threatened with trumped-up charges and loss of passports for "working against America." If

they were government employees they were transferred. Nowhere else in American society or politics did this organized, high-handed machine of retaliation function so ruthlessly against all criticism. The man it protected was Ngo dinh Diem.

Our press and certain officials complained bitterly that the accord of March 8, 1949, which gave Vietnam a relationship to France similar to that Canada enjoys with Britain, did not grant sufficient independence. It granted enough, however, that between March and August of 1950 the personnel in the American legation rose from seven to one hundred. One hundred earnest liberals, each of whom, with the exception of one able minister, Donald Heath, considered himself a soldier in the war against colonialism. France that year spent $614 million, or ten percent of the national budget to fight Ho chi Minh, the enemy in front. No one told thinking Americans about the sabotage in the rear.

Four years later the American in the street still knew nothing of the long-range planning that was going on; but the New Leader, the political organ of the AFL-CIO, on February 22, 1954, four months before Diem was eased into power, carried an article by David J. Dallin entitled “How to Win in Indochina.” American labor, reaching out into diplomatic and military spheres where it had no business, was already dictating policies that in ten short years were to bring America to the brink of a disaster as grim as Dien Bien Phu.

CHAPTER TWO

BAO DAI

Bao Dai, the former emperor, reigned again in South Vietnam under the title of chief of state when America replaced the withdrawing French. American prestige was at an all-time high, and South Vietnam was supposed to be America’s showcase for democracy. Here was America’s first experiment at replacing the discredited colonials of Europe and introducing a government and life generally prefaced as “American way of —” and held to be the ideal for all the world.

Bao Dai, the son of Khai Dinh, emperor of Annam (Bao Dai means Guardian of Greatness) ascended the throne in 1925 at the age of twelve. Bao Dai was not a resolute ruler. Neither was he as bad as the press—more determined to rid the world of monarchs than to use constitutional monarchy as an ideal against Communist totalitarianism—has painted him. General MacArthur had good reason for preserving the throne in Japan.

That Bao Dai was irresolute is incidental. He would have passed in time. The monarchy, had it been strengthened, could have served the country in its civil war and contributed to stability.

Bao Dai was charged by his detractors with having collaborated with the Japanese. He had yielded to Japanese pressure, subscribed to Japan's "greater East Asia" theme and abolished the treaties with France. Those who tried to negotiate with the Japanese military from a position of weakness found it hard honestly to blame him.

The Japanese of the war period conducted themselves more like savage beasts than either diplomats or soldiers. They were drunk with a power that took the combined forces of Britain and America four years to defeat. The helpless Bao Dai agreed to anything, then resisted in the only way he knew, with complete immobility. The same cannot be said for Sukarno and other leaders we have supported since. Our press, in its buildup for the kill, accused Bao Dai of having collaborated with Ho chi Minh in the postwar period. They overlooked the fact that Ho chi Minh was armed and supported during that

period by us, the power to whom Bao Dai was expected to look for leadership. Behind Bao Dai stretched a line of nine kings, four of whom had died in exile, the others under more or less natural circumstances. The main reason for the throne's loss of power had been its inability to oppose the French victoriously. Beneath Bao Dai, in a twisting, coiling mass that the wife of an America^ charge-d'affaires was later to compare with a basket of eels, writhed Vietnam. The political spectrum ranged from communism to the conservatism of old Asia's mandarins, from patriotism to self-interest and from idealism to plain love of intrigue. Bao Dai's life was not the sinecure it has been painted.

Had as much effort been directed to strengthening Bao Dai as was employed in ruining him, and with him the monarchy, a strong Vietnam directed by a premier heading a broad-based popular government might have welded the disparate groups into a solid front against the Reds. Bao Dai could have been replaced by his son, Bao Long, under a regency headed by Bao Dai's wife the empress, Nam Phuong. Given independence after the war with Ho chi Minh, and guidance not primarily committed to

the establishment of a socialist republic, the dynasty might have survived and in time regained its force. It was never given the chance.

America's first direct contact with Bao Dai at the Geneva conference of 1954 was also America's first indication of what we intended to do, if anything, in Indochina. Mr. Dulles had flown back to Washington. The conference was deadlocked. It was Sunday afternoon, the end of April.

General Bedell Smith entered a hired Cadillac bearing license plate VD 14 724. With the State Department eagle flying from the radio antennae, he drove to the hotel in Evian where Bao Dai and his cousin, Prince Buu .Loc, the premier, were staying. There the three men talked for an hour and fifteen minutes.

The essence of what General Bedell Smith had to say was this: I do not believe that you and the French can get an honorable armistice out of the Communists. They do not want to share the country, and neither do you. You must continue the war and, at the same time, continue to negotiate peace. Eisenhower cannot intervene directly, as in Korea, for internal political reasons. He was specifically elected on a platform of G.I. return from Korea; he cannot turn around now and send them to Indochina. But we can give you the strong Vietnamese army you lack. We will train your army. You will have your own generals and general staff. Put pressure on the French

to let us instruct your new divisions; that is the limit of our intervention.

No fault can be found with the general's proposition. It sounded straightforward and sensible. At the time a satisfactory negotiated peace seemed unlikely. Continued resistance, if it was backed by American support and encouragement, was certainly advisable, considering the state ©f Ho chi Minh's army after Dien Bien Phu.

Yet for all of Bedell Smith's apparent sincerity, Bao Dai must have had some second thoughts. The man is no fool. At times, in a pinch, he has shown rare intelligence, and those tight spots in which only good judgment saved his life gave him every reason for being cynical. He showed no resentment when General Bedell Smith told him that Mr. Dulles had been called home suddenly; otherwise he would have come in person. It is a safe guess, however, that a year later, when told that Mr. Dulles had boasted that he had never contacted Bao Dai or spoken to him in person, Bao Dai was not surprised. He had a memory.

What of this emperor whom the entire American press tore to shreds in the spring of 1955? Cartoonists sneered at him and men supposed to be supplying news tore at him with a savagery never applied to Stalin. No one attempted to tell the story of the foreign-educated young Son of Heaven who returned to his country at the age of eighteen thinking he was going to reign, and who learned that his job was to sign papers prepared by petty civil servants whom he despised. And to whom could he explain his position?

Accordingly he drew more and more into himself. His energy he released by hunting tigers. The young liberals who knew nothing of his problems accused him of betraying his country, but did nothing to help him to strengthen it.

Then came the merciless years under the Japanese, the constant pressure to join Japan's "greater East Asia" movement and declare war on the West. Bao Dai navigated the shoals till the morning in March of 1945 when the Japanese decided to exterminate the French. Bao Dai knew nothing about it. He was in the jungle, tracking elephants, when a Japanese regiment suddenly surrounded him. A Japanese general handed him a paper which he was summarily told to sign if he wanted to live.

The emperor did what he had done all his life. His policy was to ride the tide and see what could be done later. So he affixed his seal to the paper, dispossessing the French and proclaiming independence.

16

BACKGROUND TO BETRAYAL

He knew the Japs were about to collapse but what he did not know was that what was to follow them would be worse. The minute the Jap grip relaxed, Ho chi Minh sent him another paper to sign, accompanied by a threat. It was regarding Bao Dai's abdication. Bao Dai signed it. What else could he do? Bear in mind, Ho chi Minh, not Bao Dai, was the post-war protege of America's General Philip E. Gallagher, who represented the greatest power on earth; and Ho's plan was to both use Bao Dai and destroy him.

So the title of emperor was replaced by supreme councillor and the "Son of Heaven" was taken away from his wife and family and carted off to Hanoi to be paraded at Communist meetings under the name of citizen Vinh Tuy. His wife and children were held as hostages back in Annam.

Someone once wrote, “A king who has fallen must see strange sights, so bitter a thing is the heart of man.” Not one of the smart American journalists axing Bao Dai ever bothered to mention the period he spent in Ho chi Minh’s hands as a living dead man with his life hanging by a thread. A false step, a slip of the tongue, the slightest error would have cost him his head. Everything depended on his art of dissimulation, the ability to keep smiling, to act contented, to go through the farce of auto-criticism and avowed repentance. Nothing was spared him, even to letting “Uncle Ho” embrace him in public. But General Gallagher was sitting beside “Uncle Ho” in his box in the opera house in Hanoi in those days.

The Vietminh carefully calculated new ways of insulting Bao Dai, even to inviting him to dinner with his former chauffeur. And Bao Dai had to profess to like it. It was a matter of living from one day to the next, but each day he felt the net closing tighter. A mistake, a gesture, and he would have been put to death.

Two years later Bao Dai told his cousin, “At night I used to ask myself ‘why haven’t they liquidated me?’ ” Yet he knew the answer. They did not dare because of the anger of the masses. The Reds knew that the man they were degrading was still, for millions of little people, their emperor, a divine being whose death the heavens would avenge by some frightful calamity.

Therefore, while the masses were being reeducated, it was the game of Ho and the Tong Bo, his Communist committee, to go on using Bao Dai even as they discredited him. The political commissaires preached that he was nothing but a traitor who must be destroyed with all the superstitions surrounding him. Strangely enough, in almost identical words,

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David Schoenbrun, of Columbia Broadcasting System, wrote in Collier's magazine of September 30, 1955, “Diem must not only remove Bao Dai, but do it in such a way that he no longer has any usefulness as a symbol of Vietnamese unity.”

Mr. Schoenbrun, with never a word about those harrowing months in the hands of the Reds—for to mention them would have knocked his thesis into a cocked hat—used the argument that if Bao Dai were not destroyed he might become a possible turncoat to the Reds. Actually there was no reason, with the unpredictable dangers ahead, why any symbol of Vietnamese unity should be deliberately destroyed, much less one that Ho chi Minh wished

with all his heart to see exterminated, and this was one who, having been bitten once, would never walk into a Vietminh trap again if he could help it.

As 1945 drew to a close Bao Dai knew he was living on borrowed time. The moment the emperor image was destroyed there would be no reason for maintaining citizen Vinh Tuy. Ho chi Minh and his committee were as obsessed with the necessity of destroying their prisoner in 1945 as David Schoenbrun was ten years later, but their immediate preoccupation was to break him morally as well as politically. Bao Dai's life depended on his being able to convince his captors that he was no longer capable, mentally or morally, of working against them. At the slightest manifestation of independence they would have had him shot.

So dawned 1946. By this time Lu Han, the Chinese warlord from Yunnan province, was looting Indochina by virtue of the Potsdam agreement which authorized Chiang Kai-shek to accept Japanese surrender in northern Indochina. Lu Han had always given Chiang trouble, so Chiang dangled the opportunity of looting France's colony down to the 16th parallel before his arrogant warlord, to get him out of Yunnan. While Lu Han s personal troops stripped everything in their path in Indochina like a horde of locusts, Chiang sent another general to occupy Yunnan, for such was the way of doing things in the East. Ho chi Minh and his military commander General Giap knew that if they killed Bao Dai, Lu Han would use it as an excuse to wipe out their Red regime.

Among the Tong Bo the debate raged. Was it wiser to risk Bao Dai s falling into the hands of Lu Han, or would it be better to take the plunge, execute him and have done with it? While they argued, a mob trooped into the town under Lu Han's protection, crying, "Long live Bao Dai!" The Tong Bo, the dreaded Red council, decided that assassination was too dangerous. They moved their prisoner to a village in

the Tonkin delta where he was held under house arrest in a hut, wondering each day whether it would be a ball in the head or poison in his food. A month passed, then Ho chi Minh arrived, all smiles. In his pocket was an order for execution. However, he embraced Bao Dai and said, "I want you to become head of the government. I will be your assistant, your Number Two." Then the oriental game began.

Bao Dai protested that he was not worthy of the job. The honor was too great. For hours the subterfuge, the insistence on the part of Ho and the claims of abject incapacity oy Bao Dai, went on. Had he yielded the suspicions of the Tong Bo would have been substantiated: He still had ambition and could, if opportunity presented, be tempted to head a movement, in which case he should be shot on the spot.

By lulling Ho's suspicions, Bao Dai got back to Hanoi. There Ho and Giap were having their troubles with the Chinese. The insatiable Lu Han was demanding more and more money. How was Lu Han to know that where he was going his rapacity was to avail him nothing? When the time came, it was not to Yunnan that he was to return, loaded with treasure. Chiang piled Lu Han and his army on boats and shipped them to Manchuria, where Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai exterminated all but Lu Han and his personal guard. But that was yet to come. Wealth, not war against communism, was Lu Han's prime consideration, in his ignorance of the fact that communism would soon destroy him.

Ho chi Minh and his councillors were desperate and here they made their big mistake. They sent Bao Dai to bargain with Yunnan's insatiable warlord. It was the first chance that presented itself for a getaway and Bao Dai grabbed it. Lu Han put him on an American plane bound for Nanking.

No sooner was Bao Dai installed in Nanking in 1946, than General Marshall—there to talk Chiang Kai-shek into taking the Reds into his government—went to see him. Marshall offered Bao Dai big things, but his conditions were exorbitant. The final clause, in essence, was, "Do not have too many ambitions. Vietnam is only an artificial country. Tonkin is really a meridional province of China and must go back to her." Marshall was having trouble getting Chiang to accept Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai and their Communist hordes. To make the pill easier to swallow he had conceived the idea of offering Chiang Tonkin as a sweetener, which in turn entailed offering Bao Dai something in return for signing a paper dismembering his country, while his signature was still worth something. This time Bao Dai refused. Certain Americans with

interests at stake in Marshall's game never forgave him.

That was when Bao Dai went to Hong Kong. Everyone abandoned him. Had it not been for some of his friends in the Bank of Indochina he would have had nothing.

The year 1946 drew to a close. For Bao Dai the future looked black. However, a reaction was setting in among the humble toilers in the jungle villages and rice paddies. Not content with levying taxes for the war against the French, the Vietminh had set out to destroy everything that pertained to their country's past civilization. Ho's class war and the terror that accompanied it were spread to the smallest hamlet. Notables and the rich were wiped out mercilessly, with the dregs of the village doing the executing. All of the laws of religion and tradition were profaned. The young insulted the old, sons turned against their fathers, youngsters denounced their families. Who could doubt that these sacrileges were the cause of all their calamities?

Annam's ancient hierarchy rose from village notable to emperor, but within each level all men observed with respect the consideration due to their ancestors, to the old, to Heaven and to the emperor. In this system it was the emperor who served as intermediary between the deities and man. Each year in his palace in Hue he traced the first furrow, that the harvest might be bountiful in his land.

The villagers had had enough of murder and longed for the old days. Monsieur Leon Pignon was French high commissioner in Indochina at the time. Pignon watched the fencestraddling, the collaboration and profiteering of the Vietnamese in the cities and looked for a way to bring Vietnam into the war to save herself. To him, the masses of the country were the answer. He started, cautiously at first, then insistently, on his plan to bring back Bao Dai.

The former emperor, who was then in Hong Kong and forsaken by everybody, overnight became sought after. He found himself with a court. Yet, broke as he was, he was not going to go back merely to sign papers. If there was a chance of saving the country, it depended on his convincing his people that he was not a puppet. And he had no illusions; he knew that the ever-increasing weight of Red China would eventually burst through like a flood. He also knew the Vietminh and their methods.

It was in 1947 that the first French emissary, Monsieur Cousseau, was dispatched to Hong Kong to negotiate terms for Bao Dai's return, and with that trip the international intrigues began. Britain entered into the game, anti-Communist

in principle but still happy if they could torpedo anything planned by the French. Vietnamese appeared from nowhere to surround the exile they had abandoned. Like flies attracted to a bowl of sugar, they swarmed back and swore fidelity. Among them was Bao Dai's archenemy, Ngo dinh Diem; but since Diem was the son of Ngo dinh Kha, the nine-button mandarin who had served Bao Dai's father, Bao Dai took him in.

It is the opinion of most Americans who consider themselves well-informed on Vietnamese affairs that Ngo dinh Diem entered into our calculations with his arrival in America in 1951. And it is worth remarking that nowhere in the numerous biographical sketches published by Time magazine is Diem's 1947 period in Hong Kong with Bao Dai ever mentioned.

Actually, throughout the long negotiations in Hong Kong, Diem was the agent of questionable Americans already envisaging their own game in Indochina. Bao Dai hated Diem but he feared him. He knew that for twenty years Diem had never concealed his hatred of the throne. But the club Diem held over Bao Dai in Hong Kong was his claim to have an "in" with the Americans. Everything supported Diem's claims. Each morning he went to the American consulate. That he was received, trusted, even courted was evident from the statements, notes, and suggestions he brought back. With Bao Dai's "advice" originating in the American consulate on those morning visits in conversations between agents who will probably remain faceless and a Diem who became more anti-French with each passing day, Monsieur Pignon's emissary was forced to bid higher and higher.

Eventually Cousseau reported to his chief in Saigon that the Hong Kong branch of the team that in New York, Washington and Bangkok supported Ho chi Minh was sabotaging their (his and Pignon's) plan to mobilize the country behind the traditional emperor. For almost two years the fruitless dickering with Bao Dai dragged on, blocked by Ngo dinh Diem's arguments against Bao Dai's return. "Don't accept their terms. You 11 dishonor yourself forever. Don't go back until they give you complete independence" was the theme. Meanwhile Ho chi Minh advanced.

At last Bao Dai was told to make his choice, with France or with Ngo dinh Diem and his friends. Bao Dai made his decision. There was a terrible last scene between him and Diem, and Bao Dai took off for Paris to make final arrangements for the desperate gamble. The agreement with France was signed on March 8, 1949. It granted immediate limited

independence within the French Union with a pledge of increasing independence ahead. Britain's relationship with her former colonies within the commonwealth is a fair comparison. Bao Dai would have his own cabinet and army and a free hand in internal affairs. Foreign policy would coincide with that of France. The French would maintain bases, special courts for French citizens and special consideration for French advisors and the French language, in reality little more than America enjoys in Korea.

Bao Dai's choice, however, was to cost him dearly. It meant a few more years of grace for America's prestige throughout the East, but in the end Ngo dinh Diem and the foreign supporters, thwarted with him when the down-and-out emperor opted for the French, were to have their revenge—a revenge for which the American taxpayer and the growing boys destined to die in the score-settling would ultimately pay.

It was to Dalat, the scene of so many tiger hunts as a boy, that Bao Dai returned in his chartered Dakota, on April 27, 1949. His reason for refusing to go to Saigon was that the French representative and military commander still occupied Norodom Palace, which in the public mind was associated with the retention of power. The beautiful Empress Nam Phuong remained in France, where she had been transported by the French with her two sons and three daughters, while her husband, even if he did not win the war, succeeded in restoring their fortunes.

The war dragged on to its close. The French graves mounted while politicians reasoned, after the manner of politicians everywhere, that a slow drain would be accepted. Some 177,000 soldiers had been lost under the tri-color by the time Pierre Mendes-France put over on his countrymen the vast hoax that he had delivered an ultimatum to the Reds and that their signature to the treaty by which he abandoned half of Vietnam was a national triumph. Had Bao Dai yielded in 1946 to George Marshall, North Vietnam would have been communized eight years earlier. The men who pressed for that signature triumphed in the end, and the French soldiers who fought to thwart them died in vain.

It was Bao Dai's fate to be forever a pawn, if not in the game of big power politics then the pawn of his ambitious countrymen who sought to prove to the young revolutionaries of the capital that they were not servile courtiers by vying among themselves to see who could be most

discourteous to their Emperor. A few days later they would return separately to profess undying devotion and apologize privately for the

words they had spoken in public. All this Bao Dai bore without a word.

He watched the French fade out and the team on whom he had turned his back in 1949 in Hong Kong close in, with Ngo dinh Diem in the forefront. Their day had come. Wearily Bao Dai signed another paper.

CHAPTER THREE
NGO DINH DIEM

It was from an office in New York in 1954 that Monsieur Pignon, the French delegate to the United Nations who had been France's high commissioner to Indochina, watched the drama unfold. He had no doubt as to the course it would take. He knew too well the dramatis personae, the motivations, the weaknesses and all the pressures at play to have any illusions. With the failure of his Bao Dai experiment, an experiment sabotaged as much by the French section of the international socialist party as by America, Monsieur Pignon was relegated to the French delegation to United Nations. Bao Dai had been unyielding in his refusal to go to Saigon as long as the French occupied Norodom Palace, and the various Vietnamese factions and factions within factions were in the end obstructionist. Some groups tried to advance their interests by flattering Bao Dai; others courted the pro-Ho chi Minh and pro-American left by insulting him. French officials haggled over every line in their agreement, and the mass of Vietnamese waited to see which way things were going to turn.

Bao Dai's reaction, as always, was to draw into himself. He was too weak to command, too proud to argue his case; and, looking at the forces around him, he undoubtedly concluded that there was no one to whom it was worth bothering to explain. In the end he went back to Cannes and bought a twelve-room house, referred to for reasons of dignity as the Chateau de Thorenc.

On the battlefield the French setbacks continued, which provided occasion for the crusaders against colonialism to fight for their cure-all. Few Americans had ever seen a Vietnamese, but all were convinced that, given independence, the fencesitters in Vietnam would flock en masse to the recruiting office. Thousands of Vietnamese clamored for visas to America. Each had his reason: Some, who had transferred black market and

piastre exchange fortunes to Hong Kong, wanted to get out while the getting was good; others saw political futures in

currying favor with the Americans. But without influence an American visa was hard to get.

Diem, the inside man of the consulate team in Hong Kong in 1949, had no trouble. Thus in 1951 we find him living in Maryknoll Junior Seminary in Lakewood, New Jersey, from which address he became, as Raymond Cartier expressed it, “the lion of the anti-colonialists in Washington and the Catholic cardinal of the New York diocese,” while his brother operated through his own labor union in Saigon and was slipping his men into international labor organizations.

Every line of the sugary biography presented as news by Time of April 4, 1955, should be read and analyzed by those who paid to get facts during the period of our infatuation with Diem but instead were given propaganda on which to form their opinions. Though Diem resided in the seminary in Lakewood from 1951 to 1953, Time noted that he often went “down to Washington to buttonhole State Department men and Congressmen and urge them not to support French colonialism. ‘The French may be fighting communists,’ Diem argued, ‘but they are also fighting the people.’ ” A stupid line when one stops to analyze it, and certainly not one to bear weight with the parents and wives of American boys for whom the honor of being killed by those same Communists was thus reserved for ten years later. But Time never went into this, and the men buttonholed in State Department apparently never questioned such reasoning.

According to Senator Mike Mansfield’s own article in Harper*s magazine of January 1956, he and Supreme Court Justice William Douglas were taken in by Diem at a luncheon in Washington and thereafter supported his game, the object of which was Diem’s establishment as ruler of Vietnam. Senators, congressmen, labor leaders exercising political pressure, and powerful news organs, were converted to the idea that America must also fence-sit, like the able-bodied Vietnamese, and not help the French. Because though they “may be fighting the communists they are also fighting the people.” As a result enough pressure was created that no two-hour air strike came from our VHth Fleet to shatter the Vietminh

military machine after they had sacrificed first their elite and then their reserves in frontal attacks against Dien Bien Phu for a spectacular victory to exploit at the conference in Geneva.

What was never spread out before the congressmen applying rubber stamps to our policy, or before the idealistic public

approving it, was the sinuous route of oriental intrigue and the use of ruse upon ruse by the Ngo dinh brother team. To the mandarin believing power his due, nothing one does to achieve this power is dishonest. For "honest" Diem to write letters to senators and congressmen for no other reason than to get a courteous reply for Nhu to display before hesitant Vietnamese in Saigon as irrefutable proof of Diem popularity and support in Washington, was only natural. The Vietnamese capacity for cunning, dissimulation and outright deception is something the inexperienced American can hardly conceive. It is no monopoly of the Vietminh, or the Vietcong, as they now call themselves—a contraction of Viet Cong Sang, meaning Vietnam Communists. Both sides consider it good politics.

While Nhu practiced his dupery in Saigon, Diem practiced his in Washington. An example: Monsieur Jean Letourneau flew into the capital as French minister for overseas affairs to seek help in the war against Ho chi Minh. Diem requested an appointment. Monsieur Letourneau knew him; in fact, knew all his family. (He considered brother Khoi, the one killed by the Communists, the most intelligent of the Ngo dinhs.) Diem at the time was pushing his campaign against helping the French. Nevertheless, he went to Letourneau's hotel, stayed for an hour, discussed nothing of any importance, and left.

That evening the word was circulated by Diem's supporters, "No important Frenchman comes to Washington without asking to see Diem. Monsieur Letourneau called him in to ask his advice this afternoon." Thus the myth that "there is no one else" was planted, nurtured and reared to mighty oak proportions in the American mind.

Nhu's tactics were identical with Ho chi Minh's in 1946. Nhu demanded temporary solidarity of the distrustful southerners, saying, "If the Americans are convinced that you all want my brother they will put him in. And after we kick out the French you can have elections. If you don't get behind my brother," he threatened, "they [the Americans] will support the French."

Nhu drew the correspondent for the biggest afternoon paper in Paris into the Diem game by omitting the line about kicking out the French and emphasizing the promise that with their man as premier the Americans would shoulder the burden of the war. (One of the first things Diem did on assuming power was to expel said journalist, Monsieur Lucien Bodard, from the country.)

So it went. "Honest Diem," he who never hesitated to use

every trick in the book to deceive or corrupt others when it was to his advantage, won his nomination to the premiership of South Vietnam not in Vietnam but in America.

When he came up against newsmen during his Washington campaign his obtuseness was ascribed to lack of familiarity with the language. The fluctuations between wooden silence— complete lack of articulateness when asked about his program —and a torrent of abuse—laying all his country's ills at the door of the colonialists—even these were turned to Diem's advantage. If he had no answer to questions about his political plans he lowered his eyes and protested that his only desire was to be in the church; that he could never be a politician because of his inability to compromise with evil.

Neither he nor the journalists who quoted this drivel ever referred to those years in America as other than "exile." The inference was that he had fled for his life under threat of a summary trial at which no attorney would dare defend him; in sum, the fate so many anti-Communist Vietnamese were to suffer at a later date under him and his brother—sentenced to death or long prison terms in absentia, and their property confiscated.

Over and over it was repeated that Diem had refused to accept a ministerial post since 1932 because his country was not free. No attempt to help Bao Dai attain that freedom was ever made by Ngo dinh Diem. And no one, apparently, wondered why this refusal should be such a glorious tribute to Diem or shameful thing for Bao Dai. From the start the deception of the American people was inexcusable.

The truth of the matter was that no competent psychiatrist reading the gushing biography in Time of April 4,1955, would have cleared Diem for an executive job in any organization. Touching on the atmosphere of austerity in the conservative surroundings of his boyhood, Time wrote that he "prayed a couple of hours every day, got up at 5 a. m. to study, exploding

into tantrums if interrupted by his brothers or sisters." As dictator of a country, his monumental rages and outbursts, if interrupted or crossed, were to bring forth more than invectives. "He may erupt into sudden violence," the Time biography continued. "Considering someone he dislikes, he will sometimes spit across the room and snarl 'Dirty type!' "

From the office of the French UN delegation in New York, Monsieur Pignon watched developments with the weary resignation of a man frustrated and disgusted, but from the standpoint of historian-philosopher still interested in the story, every inside detail of which he knew like a book. He regarded

Diem as he was—a man who took refuge behind a blank silence or a burst of indiscriminate accusations whenever he was confronted by unpleasant facts. Pignon watched as those hawking this stubborn man with the narrow mandarin mind reached further and further for superlatives with which to describe him, even to the point of fabricating a heroic resistance record against the Japanese.* Monsieur Pignon could thumb back through files giving dates and details General Navarre, in his book La Guerre d'lndo-Chine, told of Admiral Decoux' issuing an order for Diem's arrest as a Japanese collaborator, whereupon Diem took refuge in the home of a Japanese named Komatsu; a fact which permitted Komatsu to return to Saigon two years after Diem's rise to power and embark on a mission for Diem to negotiate with Ho chi Minh in North Vietnam. Undoubtedly the American public would have risen in indignation had they been told about these negotiations.

Monsieur Pignon also noticed that when Diem left America in 1953 it was not to go back to his country where he was needed, but to go instead to Belgium, seat of the all-powerful International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in whose councils his labor leader brother was so powerful. From Belgium he went to Paris, and the road inevitably led to the twelve-room "chateau" in Cannes. It was mid-June of 1954. The strange little man without warmth, without humor, stood before the former emperor who was still addressed as "Votre Majeste" or "Sire," though officially then he was chief of state.

Bao Dai knew the tempers, the strange moods, the quick changes from timidity to aggressive fury, in the obstinate ascetic turned inward upon himself by his years of isolation from human feelings. Bao Dai knew of the

aloof disregard the man had for those who stood in his sectarian, revolutionary path. If asked to choose a premier for those perilous times, with the good of the country in mind, Diem was the last man Bao Dai would have named; but he had no choice.

On bended knees Diem swore allegiance to his emperor. Bao Dai, after all the vicissitudes through which he had passed,

♦ The "Madison Avenue" campaign working to keep its client inflated to heroic proportions did not hesitate to state that Diem "spumed the overtures of the Japanese occupation during World War II." (General O'Daniel, in American Mercury, March 1959.) General Navarre (page 127 of his book, The Agony of Indo-China) writes, "The francophobia of Mr. Diem seems to stem above all from his troubles with Admiral Decoux who ordered his arrest for collaborating with the Japanese during the war of 1940-1945."

took this one in his stride. He pretended to have forgotten the stormy session in Hong Kong five years before. He knew that the man before him had never been known to forgive a grudge. However, Bao Dai went through with his part: he named Diem his prime minister with full powers to form a government. His last injunction was "Integrate the sects into a national community; unite the country that is left to us."

The Empress Nam Phuong, like Diem a Catholic, begged Diem to save and strengthen the dynasty for her son Bao Long.

Bao Dai wrote a check for a million piastres, to pay for the "spontaneous" demonstrations that were to impress the Americans and instill enthusiasm among the Vietnamese.* Diem thanked him as he pocketed it and later penned a formal reply. "Sire, if ever you find fault with my actions, you have but to speak the word and I shall step down."

One June 26, 1954, at the age of 54, Diem went home to take over, and America's responsibility started. Ten years later, on June 22, 1964, black headlines proclaimed the degree of our success from the newsstands of New York. "Showdown in Asia," screamed the Journal-American. "We Move Up a Marine Division." And for nine of those ten years the JournalAmerican, along with the rest of the news media of America, told its readers we were winning.

Imagine Saigon as it was when Diem returned with a million piastres with which to hire a claque. Forty-three year old brother Nhu was living in what John Osborne, of Life, was to describe later as his fly-specked union headquarters. Another brother Ngo dinh Thuc, fifty-seven, was a priest. Ngo dinh Can, forty-one, and the youngest brother, thirty-nine year old Ngo dinh Luyen, were unknowns. These were to provide the base on which Diem intended to build his power. Beyond them would come the in-laws, and their in-laws, spreading downward through ever-widening rings of cousins.

A French-trained general named Nguyen van Hinh, son of former premier, Nguyen van Tam, was chief of staff of the army. Le van Vien, the ex-pirate known as Bai Vien when he ruled the impenetrable Binh Xuyen swamps where he was born, headed the Saigon police. A colorful character, this Le van Vien. Time told its readers that he bought the police, from Bao Dai, for a million dollars, a statement which was no more

Such a faked demonstration is described glowingly by O. K. Armesi LitUe Man “ East Asia'” Reader’s Digest (FeblriKiw mpf. Armstrong was a member of A F of V, the Diem lobby The Reader's Digest, following the publication of this article, failed to answer critical letters.

true than most of the reports given the American public. The truth of the matter was that Bai Vien had proved himself able to beat the Communists at their own game; and the Communists, when he was appointed police chief, were the capital’s number one problem, as we shall see later. There is no doubt that self-interest was behind his courting of Bao Dai to the point of getting himself named chief of police, but he rose almost to nobility when the big test came. Aside from the police force, he maintained a private army, called the Binh Xuyen after the swamp which had been his fief. Cholon, the Chinese city beyond the “Y” bridge connecting it with Saigon, was the capital’s vice center and Le van Vien’s monopoly. But as Monsieur Littee, first president of the Saigon court of appeals, was to admit, “There was no law against gambling, opium and prostitution in his country. Cholon supported the army of the Binh Xuyen, and the Binh Xuyen were the terror of the Reds. And after Le van Vien took over the police, I never had cause to reproach him.”

Then there were the two sects. The Cao Dai, numbering almost three million adepts, was ruled by Pope Pham cong Tac, from his papal see in Tai Ninh. The Cao Dai also had an army capable of mobilizing, in a pinch,

some 25,000 men. And after the Cao Dai came the Hoa Hao, with their claim to two million followers, a private army, and the passive support of some 400,000 Cambodians in the area between Can Tho and Long Xuyen.

General Hinh would have to be removed and replaced by a man loyal to the family if the power of the Ngo dinhs was to be firmly established. As we shall see, brother Nhu considered himself the theoretician of the family, the driving force responsible for his brother's accession to power, and as such he went about solving the problem of consolidating their position. Once firmly established they would take over the army. Later they would crush Le van Vien, the police, the Binh Xuyen and the sects, and after that there would be no protective force between the Ngo dinhs and the people.

Brother Nhu had married into the Tran van family. While the ascetic Diem remained isolated behind his presidential palace doors, Nhu and his father-in-law, Tran van Chuong (during the days of the Japanese occupation one of Bao Dai's ministers), set to erecting something that would satisfy the Americans by having the appearance of a government. But the real director of the project was Madame Chuong, Nhu's mother-in-law.

The wife is often the true head of the family in Vietnam. Whatever appearance of power she may leave her husband in public, she is capable of terrifying him at home. She may appear to be frail in her diaphanous robes, but inwardly she is a human dynamo and her rapacity is boundless. If she climbs upward beyond the family and into public affairs, out of her mind emerges the thread from which the web is woven to make fast each new gain. As the Ngo dinh's, and in their wake the Tran van's, moved upward, Madame Chuong spread an unbelievable web of palace intrigue that was later morally to bankrupt America in the eyes of the world. From her hands this web was to pass to her daughter. The one question no one asked was: How did the man on whose coat-tails this family rode upward ever get his appointment?

The Austrian socialist leader, naturalized American Mr. Joseph Buttinger, of whom the reader will learn much more in this history, wrote in the New Leader of June 27, 1955, "In the hour of military and political catastrophe, the French remembered Ngo dinh Diem." The statement is misleading. What Mr. Buttinger means by "the French" is the French socialists. No French leader to the right of Mendes-France's extreme left

position and France's American-influenced labor leaders had or would have approved Diem's appointment. Yet it was the falling Daniel government that as one of its last official acts did the actual sponsoring. The pressure must have been terrific.

By what authority, democratic process or pressure, was Diem rather than some recognized leader forced upon the Emperor Bao Dai and the country?

Senator Mike Mansfield, until the title became embarrassing, was proud of being referred to as "Diem's godfather." Colonel Edward ^ansdale, in a paper written for Michigan State University (which happily for the colonel the Pentagon refused to permit to be published) wrote, "There has been much nonsense and romance written about the appointment of Ngo dinh Diem as President de Conseil in 1954. Allegedly, this appointment was engineered by U. S. officials. The truth is that none of the Americans in position of decision, either in Washington or Saigon, knew Diem." MSU submitted this Lansdale paper to this author for comment.

So who did know him?

Mr. Ngo kai Minh, a councillor of the French Union, told this author, "Bill Gibson and David Bane were at the Vietnam desk in tne American embassy in Paris in 1954. Gibson went

to Cannes twice to ask Bao Dai to appoint Diem premier. Bao Dai did not want to do so. He stalled for time. Monsieur Letoumeau was by then minister ot the Associated States (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam). Laniel was still premier and Monsieur Bidault was foreign minister. Bao Dai called for help and Monsieur Letourneau was sent down to see him. To Letoumeau Bao Dai said, 'The Americans want Diem. What shall I do?'

" 'You are independent now; it is up to you,' Monsieur Letoumeau replied. Bao Dai then decided against Diem; but the American embassy put pressure on the French foreign office, saying, 'You have lost half of Indochina. We have put too much money and arms in there to write off the other half. If you cannot save it, quit obstructing us and support Diem.' So Bidault told Letourneau to go back and tell Bao Dai to sign the appointment."

The foreign office informed the publisher of Paris' largest afternoon paper, France Soir, that Washington had requested both France and Bao Dai to turn the Vietnamese government over to Ngo dinh Diem at the beginning of the 1954 Geneva conference. Jean Larteguy, one of the leading French

authorities on Southeast Asia, states that at America's request General Ely, the French commander in Indochina, told Bao Dai he should turn the government over to Ngo dinh Diem.

in late April 1956, French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau in an after-dinner speech told his listeners that Ngo dinh Diem was made premier of South Vietnam shortly after the Geneva conference began in 1954. This appointment followed an agreement between Paris and Washington in which Washington demanded Diem's appointment as a prerequisite to the continuation of American aid. This led Mr. Nguyen the Truyen, a former municipal councillor from Hanoi, to send open letters to President Eisenhower and President Coty in which he said, "Thank you, Mr. Pineau, for your frankness which throws light on the drama of South Vietnam. The world and our country have wondered how we got Ngo dinh Diem as premier. We now know that it was not, as his partisans say, because of his integrity and popularity but because of the favor he was able to solicit from France and America. Now that we have it from an official source that these two occidental powers got together outside of our country one fine day in 1954 and imposed on us a chief and government that suited them," Mr. Truyen continued, "will the same two governments take him away and

refrain from meddling in Vietnamese politics in the future."

Monsieur Marc Jacquet, minister of the Associated States under the Laniel government, was approached by a friend of Diem s named Ton that Can with a request for support. Monsieur Jacquet mentioned the meeting to Bao Dai, who snorted, "He [Diem] wouldn't last three weeks!" At that time Bao Dai intended to appoint his chief of cabinet, Nguyen De, as premier to succeed his cousin, Prince Buu Loc.

A short time later in the Spring of 1954 Monsieur Jacquet met Diem at a dinner and asked what his program would be if he were to head a government. What foreign policy, what social policy, what about the finances and the army? Diem did not reply. "What would you do about the Vietnamese who are in the French Army?" Jacquet asked. Diem still did not answer; but a friend with him spoke up and said, "We would throw them out and send them back to the farms. Maybe later we would take a few of them back."

"Why?" asked Jacquet. "Because they are suspect," was the answer. Since the French-trained troops were the only ones capable of making a

stand against the Communists, Jacquet opposed Diem's appointment from that day on.

Only Paul Devinat, the French secretary of state for civil aviation, and his secretary, Monsieur Varrey, were for Diem. Devinat had once directed a parliamentary investigation in Saigon and was regarded as a leading authority on Indochina. He refused the portfolio of minister of the Associated States when Jacquet resigned, and in 1956 was to write an article for Politique Etranger e, a publication put out by the office of the French premier, in which Devinat justified Diem's anti-French attitude on grounds that France had always opposed his nomination. No disclaimer of French responsibility could be more official than this article written by a pro-Diem official.

So we come back to the conclusion that certain Americans, and they alone, were behind the selection which both Colonel Edward Landsdale and Joseph Buttinger, the socialist, wished to make appear the result of spontaneous popularity and Bao Dai s submission to his country's popular will.

Diem's biographical sketch in the 1957 edition of Asicts Who s Who, presumably written by himself, reads, "Returned to Vietnam June 26, 1954 with full civil and military power to form a government; Prime Minister July 7, 1954; proclaimed Vietnam a republic and became President, October 26, 1955." And that is as much as the American people are

likely to learn from their press or any Senate Foreign Relations Committee headed by Senator Mike Mansfield.

Now for a look at the crew of this new ship ot state on whose launching Washington liberals broke the champagne bottle.

CHAPTER FOUR

NGO DINH NHU AND HIS IN-LAWS

Nhu was forty-three when the brother through whom he and his wife were ultimately to rule a nation was made premier. Those who studied with Nhu in France, where he specialized in treaties, constitutions and charters, knew him as an evasive, shy student from Indochina. Most summed him up as having an inferiority complex. None imagined that the weak schoolmate would one day become merciless, imposing on a country the fear that in his mind was inextricably linked with respect. He read Machiavelli and later explained his application of Machiavellian principles by describing himself

as a Catholic of the left. To his followers he preached the curative virtues of prisons and political internment camps—in other words, the arms of the leader incapable of inspiring a following.

When Ho chi Minh rose to power in post-war Indochina, young Nhu's first reaction was to exclaim, "He needs us intellectuals!" Unfortunately for Nhu, Ho felt that he was doing well with the time-tried Communist team he had built up over the years. He was wary of young Johnnys-come-lately and preferred to surround himself with men whose loyalties had been proved when the going was rough.

This threw Nhu back into the game of opportunism, drawing what he could from French pressure on the Communists and Ho chi Minh's pressure on the French, and leading each to believe he had something to offer. The group he gathered around him was called the Movement for Independence and Peace. Only by acquiring a following would Nhu be in position to demand of either side the consideration he felt he ought to have; so what he built up was a following of fencesitters. The name Movement for Independence and Peace was well chosen. It came out of the Communist handbook. Independence was a magic word with the Americans and peace was the jingo of the Reds.

There were two ways of acquiring peace as the war raged between Ho chi Minh and the French. One was by helping

the French win; the other by making them lose. And as Time magazine admitted, Nhu did all in his power to prevent the peace part of his platform from coming about through an anti-Communist victory. His excuse for an obstructionist policy was that the country was not free—the same argument being used so effectively by his brother in Washington. It met with the approval of the Americans. "Force them [the French] to give independence to Indochina and they will form a crusade for liberty," proclaimed Senator John F. Kennedy in Washington, at the darkest moment of the struggle.

With some American help Nhu fastened his grip on the labor movement in Vietnam and thereafter the international labor organizations plugged for him in Geneva, Brussels, New York, Washington and the lesser capitals of their respective members. Labor was the striking fist of Nhu's political action, which he conducted under another name, The Humanist Worker's Revolutionary party. It had a familiar ring.

When defeat came in 1954 and the country was divided, Nhu charged the French with treason and betrayal. Armistice was described as abandonment and used as an argument for demanding the appointment of his brother, Diem. American opinion, which had been so easily maneuvered into defending Nhu's refusal to lift a finger while the fighting was going on, fell equally hard for his cry that the armistice was betrayal when the fighting was lost. The do-good theorists claimed that he represented a "third force," hostile to both communism and the French, and that he was impeded by conviction from helping either. This specious explanation made him acceptable to America's government and press, despite his non-resistance to the Communists.

In Nhu's case the whole theory was rot. Many Vietnamese were in the "third force" category sincerely, tom by an inner conflict. But Ngo dinh Nhu was never one of them. He and his "intellectuals of the left" remained in the middle from opportunism, not scruples. They were waiting to see which side would triumph. They made no attempt to conceal their sympathy for Ho, the Communist, who was doing the fighting against the French. In fact there was a strong bond between Nhu and most, if not all, of the Americans in Vietnam at that time in their desire to see the Communists and the French file themselves off against each other, thereby leaving the field for a solution which each visualized according to his lights. In their game the "devout Diem" was never anything but a front, and Nhu played every angle to advance him. The pattern employed has since become classic.

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BACKGROUND TO BETRAYAL

It was the policy of American labor to organize native unions in the colonies of our allies, then to push the native union as a revolutionary political force. When the European power granted independence under American governmental pressure brought about by the other hand of the same unions, the right of the union leader to head the nation was claimed on the assertion that he had won independence. Considering the double role of American labor in these operations, the claim was iustified. In former colonies where a monarchical form of government existed, the next move was invariably against the throne, also in the name of democracy. Thus the labor leaders supplanted the king.

Tunisia is an example of this operation. It was at an AFLCIO congress in San Francisco in September 1951 that Bourguiba was given his mandate

and the support of the American press and State Department to “liberate” and lead Tunisia. The Moroccan dynasty temporarily escaped the same fate through the popularity of Mohammed II, but the days of the monarchy are numbered.

The hate campaign against the Emperor Bao Dai, which a perusal of old newspapers and magazines discloses, merits study now that the heat of the moment is past. The goal was simple: to create a socialist world you create socialist nations. In Vietnam we were at the stage of attack against the throne. Next would come establishment of the doctrine of the Humanist Workers’ Revolutionary party, which Nhu headed when the political parties of Vietnam met for a congress in Saigon on September 6, 1953. Nhu made a breast-beating speech, dear to the hearts of leftist demagogues everywhere. It sounded fine as printed by the liberal press. He demanded “liberty, independence, a broad-based government representative of the people, and a national assembly, honestly and freely elected, before which the government would stand accountable.”

It is interesting to reflect that a year later the speaker himself Was imprisoning Vietnamese for demanding the same liberties that he had claimed in 1953 without fear of arrest by Bao Dai and the French; and no American newsman or government official protested Nhu’s socialist program aimed at destroying the throne and tightening the grip of himself and his family. Rather, they encouraged it.

Peter Kalischer, the Far East correspondent for Columbia Broadcasting System, wrote an illuminating piece for Collier's magazine of July 6, 1956. “We are working towards a socialistic state,” he quoted Nhu as saying, “—a non-Marxist state of free co-operatives where management and labor share con

trol of industry.” Stripped of its flowery rhetoric and studied with an eye on Sukarno, Mr. Nhu’s non-Marxist personal Marxism should never have been reassuring.

Continues Mr. Kalischer, “Diem’s brother, Ngo dinh Nhu, is the second most important personage in free Vietnam. Slight, cat-like on his feet, with a large head and brilliant eyes, Nhu is a political in-fighter, a sort of combination Jim Farley and Harry Hopkins. Nhu’s Humanist Revolutionary Workers’ Party (membership figures confidential) forms the left-wing core of Diem’s broad National Revolutionary Movement.” A clique limited to

the Ngo dinh family and its hangers-on Mr. Kalischer described as a “broad National Revolutionary Movement.”

No questions were asked by Senator Fulbright’s committee, which investigated public relations men using American aid to lobby for foreign governments or leaders, when that committee went through the motions of probing such matters in 1963. Why was this piece written? How did this particular man happen to write it and Collier*s print it, and how much did it cost? These are questions that would give an irate public a heyday.

The first person to play a part in Nhu’s consolidation of power was his imperious mother-in-law, Madame Tran van Chuong. The second was his beautiful wife, who married when she was fifteen to get away from home because her mother had slapped her, and who in turn edged out her mother. Next came the head of Nhu’s secret police, Albert Pham ngoc Thao, whom the inspired pen of Joe Alsop converted into an anticommunist hero, though Thao’s career as intelligence chief for Ho chi Minh a few years before was an open book and his seventy-some thousand informers, reporting on their neighbors, public servants and even ministers of government were the terror of South Vietnam.

Each of the principal characters forming the foundation for Nhu’s naked wielding of power deserves a book, and even a cursory study cannot but cast some doubts on the leader whose props rested on such a following. Let us take a look at the head of the Tran van family.

History is full of stories of indomitable women, some legendary, some real. But if one is to look for examples of the native tigress with all her energy, ruthlessness and rapacity, Vietnam is a country in which the type is both indigenous and contemporary. Here we find By Ho Thi Hao (or Madame Tee-Bey, as she was called), the Communist guerrilla leader, with her band of foreign legion deserters and Jap mercenaries. Madame

Tee-Bey made merciless robots out of her followers. She was in her thirties when her unit, Chidoi 12, of Ho chi Minh’s southern army ravaged the Hoc-Mon area while France’s high commissioner in Indochina, Monsieur Pignon, was working to bring back Bao Dai. With her assassination squads, her own propaganda corps, police force, ministry of economy and political bureau, she built herself an empire founded on terror and brainwashing. She dressed in a black uniform with a Colt in her belt

and a gun slung over her shoulder. Death was the punishment for any infraction of the rules Madame Tee-Bey applied with an iron hand.

Then there was Madame Le thi Ngam, the wife of the Hoa Hao general, Tran van Sioai, who blew up her husband's own chief of staff with a hand grenade for holding out on her in a business deal. There was a time when Bao Dai's mother, secure in the power she wielded in old Vietnam, was referred to as a tigress also.

All things being as they were, the chances were high that Tran van Chuong, the son of the rich mandarin (or court official) family who took his doctorate in law in Paris in 1922, would have a grasping, dominating shrew for a wife. It was not a question of what percentage of Vietnamese women possess these qualities; rather did it hinge on Chuong's chances of rising high enough for his wife to reach the thin atmosphere where a consciousness of power is ever present Above a certain level a headiness sets in among the females of the species, and the latent avidity for more of everything becomes a mania. Chuong was doomed from the start, for he was related to the imperial family, therefore of the circle to which power and opportunity for more power are natural.

Chuong was cultured, his manners were charming, and for generations his ancestors had administered Annam for its emperors. In 1938 he was vice president of the Grand Council for Economic Interests of Indochina. As the name would imply, the post's opportunities for profit were many. In 1940 he became a member of the federal council. Then in 1945, just before the Japanese collapse, Bao Dai made him minister of foreign affairs and vice president of the cabinet of ministers, an honor which Tran van Chuong the man did not forget when the test came. It was Tran van Chuong the husband who was hammered into rejecting the obligations of honor.

Through the war years with the Vietminh, Chuong did nothing till the very end, in 1953, when he accepted a comparatively unimportant post as judge of the French-Vietnamese court of cassation, which was similar to the Supreme Court in

America. During those years when Chuong remained in the wings his authoritative wife was the active member of the clan. She became a councillor of the French Union, the legislative body that sat at Versailles, with all the perquisites and privileges that appertained thereto. These included the opportunities offered by the exchange office which we have

mentioned. For the Tran van Chuong fortune, like that of Bao Dai himself and all the other leading families of Annam and Cochin China, had suffered by the war—first during the stagnation period under the Japanese, then under the ruthless despoiling by Ho chi Minh.

When Ngo dinh Diem returned in 1954 with his full powers, military and civil, to form a government, command reposed, literally, in the hands of his brother Nhu. But Nhu's motherin-law, the councillor of the French Union, was supreme boss within the family. She was the one who made money while Nhu tended his roses in Dalat or organized political labor unions in Saigon. Hers was the spotlight, the trips to parliamentary meetings where she sat with those whose decisions made front page news, while her frustrated daughter, married to the indigent rose fancier and coffee-house conspirator, suffered from boredom. And even worse, anonymity!

Lucien Bodard, the French writer on the Far East, wrote of Madame Nhu:

"All her powers of rage I saw when Bao Dai returned to power and Diem refused to be Prime Minister. At the time she was living in Dalat in a tawdry house. When she could stand no more she would telephone Bao Dai and ask him to come and get her. A sumptuous car would call for her while her husband smelled his flowers. Later, things were worse. In Saigon the life of the Nhus was almost clandestine. They lived in modest rooms adjoining a religious clinic. The first time I went there I crossed a dusty yard where the washing was hung out to dry. Out of a passage covered with corrugated metal came a young woman in a white tunic and green pants. She was shabbily dressed. Children clung to her. She was so depressed by disappointment I did not recognize her. All she had to do was wash clothes, cook meals and wipe ner children."

With Diem's sudden projection into a position of power in the last days of June 1954, the petulant daughter of the Chuongs was swept upward as a member of the new "ruling family." And, though her father was immediately made minister of state, an indefinite post specifying no particular field of responsibility but permitting everything, by the unwritten

laws of protocol operating within families Madame Nhu theoretically took precedence over her mother. Yet the mother had experience and she

was not to give up without a fight. The palace intrigues started. It was both a power-struggle and a score settling.

Jean Larteguy, author of numerous books on Vietnam which the Pentagon would do well to study, described Nhu's wife, who was destined to win in the end, as the "courageous, enterprising sister-in-law who, while Diem worked from within the seminary in New Jersey, was the belle of the court at Dalat, and the intimate of Bao Dai." (Paris Match, Sept. 14, 1963.)

But Larteguy excused her frivolities and dalliances as weapons of a woman who knew what she wanted. 'This ravishing woman with the cool head," he continued, "never forgot to serve her clan in all her strayings. She is credited with a certain number of affairs. They were always to gain an end. They served the cause of the Ngo dinhs. Madame Nhu played a great part in the rallying of certain young officers at a time when Diem could not have survived without gaining the support of the army. Could it be that this is one reason for the revenge that she is so determined to take on men?

"Diem never could stand the presence of a woman. He felt ill at ease and immediately became obnoxious, except in the case of his beautiful sister-in-law, who in her way, by her ambition and her tenacity, is a man. She rendered immense service to the family, and they knew they could depend on her. If she sinned, it was by fidelity to her own."

Aux Ecoutes, the French diplomatic weekly, of November 11, 1963, all but mentioned by name the official in the American Embassy to whose winning over by Madame Nhu the Vietnamese, inveterate gossips, credited the perpetuation of the family's grip. Wrote Aux Ecoutes, 'The beautiful sisterin-law of the president based all her power on the physical attraction she exercised over military chiefs and also—why not admit it?—on American counsellors and diplomats in Saigon."

It took time for beauty and wiles to dislodge the mother who had been so long in the spotlight. Through the first year of Ngo dinh ascendancy visualize Madame Chuong as ensconced in the center of a vast web. Her husband she sent off to Washington to sit in an embassy. Pham duy Khiem, whom Saigon gossip insisted was her lover, she presented with an ambassadorship to France. Whether Nguyen huu Chau, the husband of one of her daughters was, as rumor had it, a former lover or not, one thing is certain: The daughter never wanted

to marry him and so hated the union that eventually she announced her intention of getting a divorce and marrying a Frenchman; whereupon Madame Nhu arrested her own sister and the sister attempted suicide. But all this was yet to come. Nguyen huu Chau, while Madame Chuong was distributing sinecures, became secretary of state to the presidency, a job that would correspond to that of assistant to the president in America (except that in Vietnam the new president accepted advice only from his brother and later, out of fear of her rages, from his sister-in-law.)

Chuong's brother, Tran van Do, was set up as minister of foreign affairs, and the Chuong son, Tran van Khiem, eventually became press chief, a post which he held until Nhu made him nominal head of the secret police toward the end of the regime.

It was accepted that should anything happen to Diem, Tran van Chuong would remain in Washington to maneuver the Americans while Tran van Do, his brother, would move into Norodom Palace. At the top of the pyramid, holding all the strings, was Madame Chuong. The third brother of the Tran van family, Tran van Phuoc, Madame Chuong dispatched to the hinterlands as mayor of Dalat and chief of security for the high plateau region. There he remained until a 40 million piastre scandal involving slaughterhouse taxes back in Saigon provided an excuse to make him Saigon police prefect m the spring of 1959.

The only real change in the power setup from 1954 to 1956 was Madame Nhu's gradual edging out of her mother. It was still within the family circle, and its effect was to lock out more securely than ever the political leaders who had borne the brunt of the fight for independence. The result was a police state run by two mandarin families, one of which, the Tran vans, was still bound by a certain loyalty to tradition and emperor. The personal ambitions of the other, the Ngo dinhs were boundless. Diem and Nhu and the latter's grasping wife were determined to sweep the table clean and establish a new dynasty—themselves.

One heard nothing in America of Diem's sister, Madame t-a-Le, through all this; but she was there though she occupied no government post, she waxed rich on her rice monopoly in Central Vietnam and advanced her son-in-law, Tran trune ung, as secretary of state for defense. Her brother-in-law, Nguyen van Thoai, from 1954 to May 1955 she pushed into the lucrative post of minister of planning and reconstruction.

CHAPTER FIVE

From the first no voice of advice or criticism was permitted. And as the stranglehold of the strange man and his powerhungry family tightened, the suppression of southern demands for a voice in their own government became more ruthless. The new premier, no one forgot for a moment, was a northerner from Hue, and had been installed by America. Southerners who had gone through with the farce of affecting enthusiasm wanted him to live up to his share of the bargain, i.e., an election m which they could install a leader of their own. Instead they were hounded into exile or summarily arrested.

So within a matter of weeks after assuming power in 1954, Diem became known as "the parachuted"—dropped from above by a foreign power (America) and without roots in the soil. Anyone repeating this in the United States was denounced by those who were working so hard to cram Ngo dinh Diem down the throats of his countrymen.

Brother Nhu's insurance against criticism was to saturate homes, offices and neighborhoods with informers whose job it was to stop justified complaints by arrests, not reforms. One exception existed, one opposing voice which Diem and Nhu dared not silence. It was permitted to continue as a sort of ineffectual resistance for six years, as proof that they were democratic. Whenever Diem was asked why he did not enlarge his government, the answer, duly repeated and approved by the entire American press, was, "They [the southerners] won't cooperate with me." Probably never in the history of the world was refusal to be a yes-man found to be an evil by so many theoretically idealistic Americans.

The one opposing voice permitted to live in liberty, if not to actually campaign, served to make the Vietnamese in the street more cynical of our whole policy. This man was Phan huy Dan, sometimes known as Phan quang Day, and he is worth more than a paragraph in any honest study of America's big experiment. For not only would Dan, as he was called, be the only "opposition" leader at liberty to dispute power with

Madame Nhu's family, the Trans, if something had happened to Diem, but he provides an excellent example of the sort of man to whom our agents were invariably drawn. Dan had been all things to all people in his time,

depending on who was dispensing the perquisites. Politically he had ranged from fervent monarchist to popular democrat.

In 1946, when the Dai Viet party under Nguyen ton Hoan attempted a coup d'etat against Ho chi Minh, Dan was in on it with a group calling themselves the Dai Chung (Great Masses). The attempt failed because the French were trying to get along with Ho chi Minh at the time, and they regarded Ho chi Minh as the lesser threat. In all justice it must be remembered that America was also granting Ho "agrarian reformer" garb and considerable support. Those in the Dai Viet plot who were able to escape fled to China. Among them, leaving his wife in a village some hundred and fifty miles away and taking with him the daughter of a party member who had been doing his cooking, went Dan. The Dai Viet accused him of taking the party's funds.

In 1947 the nationalist leaders brought their scattered organizations together again and converged on Hong Kong to demand a say in the new agreement Bao Dai was negotiating with the French. They promised they would stick together, but Dan used the rest of the group as a bargaining point to advance himself. In return for a post as personal counsellor to Bao Dai, he sold out his friends and helped form what they considered to be a puppet cabinet.

In 1952 the Americans, each trying to apply his own theories to Southeast Asian politics, attempted to sell the idea of a third force," a movement—previously mentioned—that would oust both Bao Dai and the French and then oppose the Reds. (This period provided the material for Graham Greene's book, The Quiet American. Gene Gregory, publisher of the Times of Vietnamf was the American Graham Greene fictionalized in this novel. A thread in Greene's plot concerns the involvement of the hero with terrorist bombings in Vietnam. In real life, an American named McKay connected with the OSS was credited with furnishing explosives for a theater bombing in 1952 and was expelled from the country by the French. The CIA was said to be behind his return to Vietnam after Diem's rise to power.)

The "third force" idea was not a new one. Other nationalist leaders had tried and rejected it when they found that activities against Bao Dai always aided Ho chi Minh indirectly, and invariably only made more necessary the continuation of the

French rule. Bao Dai himself had tried an anti-French, anticommunist "third force" platform and failed for lack of support. American liberals, however, were more ardent in fighting colonialism than they ever were in the war against Communism. They backed a new Vietnamese party which they put Dan to organizing in Thailand. He was given plenty of money, and every effort was made to attract recruits. But Dan was a northerner. Old scores had not been forgotten and his movement collapsed.

In preparation for his next try, he dropped the girl who had fled to Hong Kong with him in 1946 and married a woman from Cochin China, hoping it would make him a southerner by marriage. (Northern Vietnam, it will be recalled, was known as Tonkin, Annam occupied the center, and Cochin China was the land to the south.) Later Dan was to try to form still another new party, which he called the Democratic Bloc, named to attract American support.

WTiy was this political adventurer the only man permitted to go through the motions of opposition to the premier whose towering rages had already become the terror of the country? Others fled, had their property confiscated, disappeared into prison, drew death sentences or simply disappeared; but Phan huy Dan lived under a magic protection. The explanation: he had dug in with OSS during the war. The green officers whom he convinced of his importance then based their reports on his information. To admit, then or later, that Phan huy Dan was a Phony would be to admit that they had been fooled. How sound Dan's information had been was immaterial. We won the war and his superiors were promoted. When it was over, those who wished to escape the hazards of competitive life utomatically became "China specialists" or "Southeast Asia specialists, ' regardless of how ignorant they had been a year betore. Many transferred to Central intelligence Agency, others returned to the U.S.A. as businessmen. Phan huy Dan

2 u!1touch with aI1 of them- Wherever he went an invisible umbreUa protected him; it was the whisper, "Keep in good with ium, he is an American agent."

he Was or not ceased to matter. The whisper was in fKie u ?revent Diem and Nhu from touching him until, J»Z„he*?rSS-thei1 conviction that America could not that iw8 WIth°tf them—they threw caution to the winds; but th mH WaS stlU ^ar off- Through the despotic suppressions of and bal

J621!’ /aCt that men wh° were American agents hnv r,ld dfectP'PehneS t0 Washington were friends of Phan huy Dan, placed him above persecution.

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As the centralization of power spread downward through Diem’s immediate family, to thin out through in-laws and widening circles of cousins, resentment of America as the power responsible for the repressive and alien family kept pace with the growing hatred of Diem. And as was only natural, the fact and source of Dan’s protection, which no other Vietnamese enjoyed, inevitably worked aginst him and us. The stigma applied to him as tool of the America’s offset any advantages he enjoyed through his limited freedom of movement.

A malaise gripped the country—a realization that day by day the family in power was tightening its grip and that unless something were done and done quickly, it would be too late. The political parties were restless, but they and their splinter groups pulled against each other. Jealous leaders refused, even temporarily, to unite in a common front. Thus Nhu was permitted, through his secret police and agitators, to practice the game of divide-and-rule. Antagonisms between northerners and southerners, both anti-Communist, increased. The most important of the nationalist, anti-Communist political parties opposing Diem’s growing power was the Dai Viet party we have mentioned, the party that in 1946 came within a breath of beating Ho chi Minh. The Dai Viet leader, Dr. Nguyen ton Hoan, still convinced of the purity of all things American, a delusion that was fostered through his personal friendship with and confidence in American Ambassador Donald Heath, prepared to fly to Washington in late 1954, with a visa provided him by Ambassador Heath. All that was necessary, Dr. Hoan thought, was to explain to the Americans and they would rectify their mistake of backing Diem.

The two religious sects, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, were alarmed, but not yet to the point of making a move. In 1953 they had formed a United National Front, as they called it, with the Binh Xuyen—the organization of Le van Vien who was to become head of the police in 1954. The Binh Xuyen was more than a gang of pirates; it had the organizational attributes of a secret society, one of those brotherhoods to be found in the Orient and nowhere else. The eyes and the ears of the Binh Xuyen were everywhere. They alone had proved that they could beat the Communists at their own game. Perhaps it was a feeling of security that kept the two sects

and the Binh Xuyen, with their three private armies, from making a move while Diem and Nhu prepared to take over the national army before their eyes. For in those months of July and August 1954, the honeymoon with the new regime was already over, and the army loomed as the bulwark between

the Ngo dinhs and the people. It was to the army that the people turned.

Like all crises, the mounting one in Saigon started with countless conversations, carefully sheltered behind the conditional. “If we were to do this,” was the preface until that step was past and “we must do this” opened a new phase.

Diem had appointed himself minister of the interior (i.e., head of the national police) and minister of national defense (i.e., controller of the army). Tran van Do, the uncle of Madame Nhu, was minister of foreign affairs. Tran van Chuong was minister of state, but his role in the unsavory Trang trong Kim government of 1945 under the Japanese had not been forgotten. Brother Nhu stayed out of the picture, preferring to operate as “counsellor to the president,” with his 180,000 regimented labor union members acting as a sort of iron guard for a personal fascism-of-the-left.

Cochin China’s six million southerners had not a minister in the government as the showdown approached between Diem and young General Nguyen van Hinh, the chief of staff of the army. Hinh’s father, Nguyen van Tam, had been premier two years before, and he passed the laws guaranteeing the rights of labor unions which, in the summer of 1954, enabled Nhu to use his union to outdistance the leaders who had bona fide political backing. As a consequence Nguyen van Tam was the first to have his property confiscated and be driven from the country.

Diem’s brother, Thuc, the priest of the family, was bishop of Vinh Long to the south; so Cochin China, without representation at the time in the cabinet, became his personal fief. The northern area, it must be remembered, was turned over to the iron-fisted brother Can. Brother Luyen was packed off to Europe as ambassador-at-large. Wherever one looked there were only Ngo dinhs and Tran vans, save for the incumbents of two unimportant posts, agriculture and public health, both held by nonentities.

Lieutenant General “Iron Mike” O’Daniel, head of America’s military aid advisory group was an all-out partisan of the Ngo dinhs. From the moment of Diem’s arrival he forgot the main purpose of his mission.

Strengthening Vietnam against the Communist power to the north was the least of O'Daniel's worries. Eventually he left the army and returned to America as Diem's heavy artillery in the greatest public relations campaign ever launched to sell America a liability. More will be said later of General O'Daniel and Colonel Edward Lansdale,

the political officer who was dispatched to help Diem strangle his opposition.

Also there was Professor Wesley Fishel, Diem's old friend from Michigan State University, who for seven years turned the press and political science section of an American hall of learning into indoctrination organs to sell Vietnam's outsideimposed despot and his policies. On the side, Fishel served as consultant to the U. S. operations mission—the group supplying money to keep Diem in the saddle. Fishel also worked from the inside as a member of Ambassador J. Lawton Collins' staff.

It was the practice of this American team, as southern discontent mounted, to divert the storm from Diem's head by running a local popularity contest against the French by resurrecting old grudges and directing popular anger against tne late colonialists! In Vietnam it met with limited success; in America, far from the scene, there was no voice to contradict them.

An important adjunct to this team was the International Rescue Committee, IRC, as it was called, of New York, which worked on the American front. This organization, mto which no investigative spotlight ever probed, had both the finances and, apparently, a reason for sending a "mission" to South Vietnam. Whom did they send? The Austrian socialist leader and naturalized American, Joseph Buttinger.

By September 1954 something had to give. Diem knew that the southerners were stirring, but slow methods and negotiations were not his way. He proposed to break them. By that time, however, the army was in revolt and wholeheartedly in sympathy with the opposition.

The account given by General Hinh's father, the former Premier Nguyen van Tam, of the start of this affair, which American press agencies and newspapers presented as an example of our brilliant diplomacy and Diem's miracle-working is here for the record.

For all his courteous, old-school air, Nguyen van Tam is a fighter. One of his sons was killed by the Vietminh, and when he took over his

premiership under Bao Dai in June 1952, it was with the blunt declaration of policy, “We are going’to fight Communists.” Naturally Hinh turned to his father when he was faced with the political decision. We might add that Hmh and his young generals also thought that ex-Premier Tam would have better luck with French General Ely.

“I was up in Dalat when it started,” former premier Tam told the author. “My son telegraphed me to come down. I

flew to Saigon and they [his son and the othfer military leaders] told me they were going to oust Diem. The people didn’t want Diem, and Bao Dai was behind my son, so they were going to throw him out if he refused to obey Bao Dai’s order to step down. I said, ‘It is all right with me, but don’t forget, the French have charge of the gasoline and ammunition. You can’t do anything without them.’

“So they sent me to see the French. The first officers I talked to said, ‘It is all right with us, on our level, but you will have to see General Ely.’ I went to General Ely and told him what we were going to do. And General Ely replied that he would not give us either gasoline or ammunition. He said, ‘There are a thousand reasons for supporting Diem, chief of which is America will cut off all aid if you don’t.’ Ely wouldn’t give us anything, so we were lost.”

Such was the stand taken by the French general charged with preserving order. The propaganda given America then or since never mentioned this. Rather, it charged Ely with openly agitating and oacking a revolt. He is accused of encouraging the whole plot as a means of restoring colonialism. It was reported that he withheld ammunition from Diem, but at no time is he given credit for trying to preserve peace by keeping both sides from fighting, much less pleading Diem’s case with Hinh’s father.

Hinh was thirty-eight and with no political experience or ambition, when he was confronted with the job of ousting Diem or seeing Diem and Nhu take over the army, the only protective shield between the Ngo dinhs and the people. He had graduated from the Ecole Superieure de l’Air and was a veteran of the Italian and German campaigns. He had thirteen decorations, including the Legion of Honor, the Croix de Guerre and the American Air Medal. During the war against the Vietminh he had commanded a squadron, and in 1951 ne left the French air force with the

rank of lieutenant colonel to enter Vietnam's new national army as a brigadier general. In his battle dress covered with ribbons, he incarnated in his person the young Vietnam who, with the 270,000 men available to his command, would, it was hoped, stop the Reds. He was Vietnam's heroic soldier, the only general that would have inspired a Vietnamese boy to join the army.

Suspicious of everyone but his brothers and in-laws, Diem contemplated from Norodom Palace his dashing chief-of-staff and did not like what he saw. In fact, Diem decided to get rid of Hinh; it was one of the first official acts in the building he

renamed "Independence Palace." His way of doing it was typical.

On Thursday morning, September 9, 1954, a telephone jangled noisily in the Saigon office of Air France. A clerk picked up the receiver. "This is Norodom Palace," he was told. "General Hinh will leave for Paris on the seven o'clock flight, Sunday morning, September 12."

"Very well," replied the clerk. 'Who is speaking?" The party had hung up.

The reservation clerk shrugged his shoulders. He knew his Vietnam well enough to know the dividing line between what was his concern and what was not. He obediently filled out a reservation sheet to be scanned by typists, errand boys, clerks and the horde in general infesting all business offices in the Orient. News of the impending trip crossed Saigon with the speed of a national calamity. One of the last to hear about it was General Hinh, when telephone calls started asking why he was leaving.

Hinh refused to go. The army was behind him, and around the army a hard core of popular resistance had begun to form. Hitherto Hinh had regarded the private armies of the Binh Xuyen and the sects as threats to himself. But Diem's dismissing of Hinh and the weak-dictator manner in which he had delivered it drew the four disparate forces together.

Since Hinh had refused to take the Sunday morning plane, Diem sent him another order, Sunday evening, telling him to leave on Tuesday. Hinh replied that he could not. The army was in the process of being transferred from French to Vietnamese command and he could not leave on such short notice.

The truth of the matter was that Hinh knew the army represented the people in this affair, and both army and people had had enough. It is interesting to read the reflection of Raymond Cartier on the explosion

developing. To Cartier, France's great mistake had been the basing of their confidnce, not on the Vietnamese masses who were close to the soil, but on a limited, upper-middle class who thought they knew how to govern because they had been given a varnish of western culture. The result permitted a family to grasp all the levers of command without having any real understanding of what should be done. Personal and family interests were placed above the country's. The young intellectuals thought they were making politics; in reality they delved in intrigue. When the country needed a leader with roots in its soil, able to feel its pulsations while keeping an open mind toward Western ideas, it had no such

men. There was no lack of them among the Vietminh, Cartier lamented.

It was a strange situation. Even as the storm clouds gathered, out of the American embassy came a torrent of publicity, insulting the intelligence and damaging America in the eyes of Asia. A vast improvement was heralded. Tibar Mende, the European journalist, wrote of our fervor at the time, "As usual, the Americans go about their business in dead earnest. Having decided to transplant their variety of democracy into this forgotten comer of Asia, they rejoice in every gesture of 'democracy' as only a mother could rejoice in the progress of her child. The greater majority of Americans in Vietnam very sincerely believe that in transplanting their institutions they will immunize South Vietnam against Communist propaganda." (Tibar Mende, in Esprit, p. 933, Paris, June 1957)

Mende was written off as a stupid and embittered colonialist. Papers told the Vietnamese that they had been badly treated but democracy was coming in. Agrarian reforms, the changing of unpopular taxes, and an end of misappropriation had come; new industries would be introduced, reconstruction pushed and the army reorganized. Before it had started the new program was hailed as a success. Right had conquered evil. And no one heard the murmurs that were rising from the villages.

The ascetic Diem remained isolated in his palace, the doors of which this longed-for new order never passed. All Diem wanted for the moment was to get his hands on Hinh's army. Removal of the causes of dissatisfaction were never given a thought.

When Hinh arrived at his office on Monday morning, following the final Sunday afternoon orders to leave for Paris, generals and colonels were waiting for him. Telegrams pledging support were flowing in from all over the country. Diem, on his part, had sent out a call to his partisans in Hue,

where he was bom, and beyond that was hoping to limit the spread of the opposition by censoring all news dispatches.

Hinh's empty jeep, escorted by motorcycles, circulated through the streets, but no one knew where Hinh was or what he was doing. Instead of commanding, instead of taking over Saigon while the country literally offered it to him on a platter, Hinh waited for no one knew what.

That night the firing started. Machine guns and hand grenades shook the European quarter. No one knew who was firing, or why, for anyone could have fired and everyone had reason to. It was impossible for the Westerner, who had never lived such dramas, to understand this situation, it was the

Orient, with its plots of warlords, its cupidity, its double-dealings, all to the accompaniment of high-sounding speeches that carried a noble and patriotic ring when read the next day in the New York papers.

Diem ordered Hinh to hand over his command. Hinh refused and told Diem to resign instead, whereupon Diem named General Nguyen van Vy commander of the Saigon-Cholon area, to replace Hinh. Vy went for a talk with Hinh and promptly joined him. The whole insubordination, American newspaper readers were told, is due to "the hold still exercised by the departing French over a small group of venal officers. The French are determined to impede democracy."

While carefully sown rumors, under-the-table dickering, and plots and counterplots flourished, Diem stalled for time, to give his American protectors time to save him. He resurrected a white-haired general named Nguyen van Xuan, the last head of the government of Cochin China before it became part of a greater Vietnam. Xuan had been one of the founders of the Vietnamese army, a fact with which, along with his age, made him a venerable figure. Though two years before he had been an implacable enemy of\ the Ngo dinhs, Diem brought him back politically, and for no one knows what price talked him into accepting the post of minister of national defense, over Hinh. And Hinh, with his years of training as a soldier, was too bound by the habits of discipline to refuse to recognize the appointment. He wired Bao Dai for advice. When Diem heard of the telegram he branded Hinh a rebel.

It was Bao Dai's last chance to become a leader. A week before he had been hated and detested for remaining in Cannes while the dismemberment of the country was going on. The day Hinh turned to him for instructions,

all that was forgotten. Had he risen to the occasion at that moment he could have saved his throne. Everything depended on Bao Dai's speaking with a clear voice and issuing a command. Overnight the country forgot its past complaints and looked to him again, waiting for his word.

Despite the desertion of officers and soldiers who were frightened by threats from the American embassy that they would receive no more pay if they stayed with Hinh, it was clear that Hinh held the situation in his hands. All he was waiting for was a wire from Bao Dai to make his orders legal. Without that wire he lacked initiative to do anything on his own. Everything was confusion as Hinh awaited a reply but, once and for all, whatever happened, a great heave of the country seemed about to throw off the fanatic and his family.

The minister of health disappeared. In a matter of hours nine other ministers handed in their resignations. The governmental palace was guarded only by a few green-bereted gendarmes, Diem's family, and the few outsiders he had rushed in from Hue.

Le van Vien, the Binh Xuyen leader, had flown to Cannes to make a report to Bao Dai before the crisis started. There he and the emperor learned of the new turn of events together. At the height of the confrontation Le van Vien returned with instructions from Bao Dai that Hinh stand his ground. Some 400,000 Vietnamese, the people of the swampy delta where the Mekong River fans out to the sea, were ready to follow Le van Vien. His private army of some 11,000 armed and 25,000 unarmed men possessed the best morale in the country, and they were loyal to Bao Dai, which in this case included Hinh. The Hoa Hao sect, numbering approximately a million and a half and having an army of between 5000 and 10,000 under old General Tran van Sioai, pledged its support. So did the pope of the Cai Dai sect with his two million adepts and over 20,000 men under arms.

At that moment the reply to Hinh's telegram came. What pressure had been applied to Bao Dai, and by whom, we shall probably never know, for it was never Bao Dai's way to seek an out from his mistakes by making explanations. Suffice to say, the agents of the greatest power on earth, America, were given free hand to see that Diem triumphed. Still, all that was lacking was a word. And Bao Dai chose that moment to assure Hinh of his esteem and tell him he was thinking the matter over.

As George Chafford points out in his book Indochine—Dix Arts de L'Independance, Bao Dai was aware that his margin for maneuvering had been greatly reduced. Edgar Faure had succeeded Mendes-France as premier of France. Though Faure s estimation of Diem was very low indeed, his desire was to wash his hands of Vietnam completely. There were favors he wished of the Americans elsewhere, and he was not going to strain Franco-American relations by opposing anything the Americans wanted to do in Southeast Asia, even though they were wrong. With the French disassociating themselves, Bao Dai was at the mercy of an American team which made no attempt to conceal the fact that they would be happy to have a pretext for running him out. The antiFrench campaign was to pave the way for a demand that France withdraw all troops and get out of the country completely, this leaving Diem and his American advisors and the

scurrying progressives from Michigan State a free hand. All things considered, it is hard to criticize Bao Dai for acting as he did.

Madame Nhu is credited with having conceived the idea of a demonstration in Diem's favor at that tense moment, on Tuesday afternoon, September 21, 1954. Who was there to demonstrate for him save his friends and the unhappy Catholic refugees the French air force and the American navy had brought down from the North? Out of their miserable lodgings the refugees were routed and told to assemble on Avenue Pasquier for a march on Diem's palace. At their head they carried the national flag, along with banners proclaiming their loyalty to President Ngo dinh Diem. Most wore crosses on their breasts. There was a burst of fire and the marchers wavered. A few of the group reached the Place Pigneau-de-Behaine, where they hung some signs on the grill surrounding the cathedral. The priests took down the signs and begged the marchers to go home. The last thing they wanted was that their refugees be dragged into Diem's political game.

it was asking for trouble, in the over-heated atmosphere. Diem, in his seclusion, alternately timid or flaring with rage, was already regarded as a foreign monk-dictator, trying to dominate the South from within his cell. The refugees, with every gesture of solidarity with Diem, set themselves further apart from the people with whom they were going to have to live.

At that moment Diem and his family stood alone before the sects, the army and the police. That he survived is the first of the miracles he is credited with performing. Actually there was no miracle about it. While Hinh sat in his command post and let time pass with good-natured tolerance, Diem's "victory" was being prepared. Hinh, by procrastinating and waiting for Bao Dai to think things over, was sealing his own fate.

Without warning the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao denounced their allies of the day before and marched over to Diem. American dollars and pressure worked the miracle. A Vietnamese named Pham xuan Thai had been with an American Adventist Mission in Indochina for years and claimed to have influence with the Americans. For that reason the Cao Dai pope, Pham cong Tac, had taken him on as a political advisor. As the forces against Diem mounted, Pham xuan Thai's importance to the pro-Diem team in the American embassy increased. The deal that split this solid front and threw the weight in Diem's favor involved several million dollars. The exact sum is not known.

Perhaps it was more than the five to ten million estimated, considering the number of leaders it bought. The American taxpayer picked up the tab. Nine years later they were to pay an equal amount to have their liability deposed.

CHAPTER SIX
THE BINH XUYEN AND THE CAO DAI SECT

What were these Binh Xuyen, referred to in one breath as pirates and in the next as policemen, who were to play such an important role in the power struggle in Vietnam until, with our help, Diem was able to destroy them?

Their story and the story of Bai Vien, their leader, who came to be known as General Le van Vien, surpasses anything Hollywood has ever produced. Interwoven with them is the story of the two religious sects, the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, and corrupt warlords fluctuating between patriotism and piracy until in the end their own cupidity brought about the downfall of their spiritual leaders. When that day arrived, of the three of them it was the leader of the Binh Xuyen who rose nearest to nobility. Why we should have rendered Ho chi Minh the immeasurable service of destroying them is something no one can explain, unless it was for the

reason that Le van Vien, when the cards were on the table, remained loyal to his Emperor. And it is part of the phenomena of American liberalism that any anti-western demagogue hard-pressed for a victory to hold up to his people has only to attack a king to enjoy American approval and recognition. Nasser's invasion of Yemen is a ready example.

In his doctorate-in-law thesis Pierre Debezies wrote, "Bai Vien is surely one of the most extraordinary figures of South Vietnam. How did this highway robber, hunted by the authorities through the swamps of Soi Rap ten years ago, raise himself in such a short time to the position he has reached?" "Binh Xuyen" means "toward the peace." It was the name applied to a village in the heart of the swamps that no outside enemy could attack without signaling his presence so long in advance an ambush would be waiting for him on the way. So the village of Binh Xuyen, hidden in the impenetrable marshes to the south of Cholon, was the home base of Bai Vien, and the band which took the village's name.

In the beginning they lived by piracy and ransom. In all fairness one must add that the region offered little opportunity to live otherwise, and their incursions were supported by the

colonial economy as a form of risk natural to Asia. The Binh Xuyen were in no sense a sect, and at first they had no interest in politics. For years some hundred small bands had operated independently out of the swamps. They would make sporadic raids and disappear, without higher organization. Ex-convicts, escapees from justice, men who for one infraction or a hundred had been banned from Saigon, made up most of these gangs. The best known was led by Dong ba Duong and his brother.

During the Japanese occupation the swamp pirates became a sort of Robin Hood band. Their daring and the genius with which they exploited their geographical position, and the troubles caused oy the occupying Japanese, inspired admiration for the Binh Xuyen among the masses. Gradually they emerged as nationalists. When the Japanese withdrew, the Communists came, and in the eyes of the people, if not legally, the rehabilitation of the pirates was complete. During the brief period of Communist "legality" Bai Vien edged his men into the police as auxiliaries

and acquired an amnesty for everyone as well as a complete education in Communist methods.

Ba Duong remained the big chief however, followed more or less obediently by smaller leaders such as Muoi Tri and Bai Vien. The agent sent by the Communists to be overlord of the area was none other than the ferocious Nguyen Binh, the most brutal of Ho chi Minh's lieutenants; the man who, as head of the Nam Bo, the Communist revolutionary council for Cochin China, was mastermind of South Vietnamese terrorism and subversion. Through all that happened in this period runs the name of Nguyen Binh, the merciless, twisted killer who, without ever becoming a Communist party member, m his maniacal zeal became their robot, destroying his country, his countrymen and, in the end, himself. Nguyen Binh trusted no one, and he was particularly suspicious of the independent nationalists of the swamps. Clashes became more frequent, and m February 1946 Ba Duong was killed in a combat.

Theoretically the command was to pass to his brother, Duong van Ha. At that moment Bai Vien emerged from the shadows to start his meteoric rise. And in observing this pirate who was to come within a hair's breadth of establishing himself as military leader of his country at war, it is his qualities of leadership we are appraising, not his morals. For are we fighting communism in South Vietnam, or are we out to establish blue laws? If the moralist says that our aim is both, would it not have been still better to let the two forces in question destroy themselves against each other?

The men composing the loosely-knit bands infesting the Binh Xuyen swamps were without any common direction when Ba Duong died. They were undisciplined outlaws, and the chief who rose to lead them won the loyalty of this army and subjected it to his own iron discipline. He had come up through a proving ground few generals could survive.

The period of Bai Vien's rise was also, as we have mentioned, the period of Ho chi Minh's respectability, a shocking period for America. In late 1945 and early 1946 Newsweek's Harold R. Isaacs enthusiastically compared "Uncle Ho" to George Washington, and in 1945 American general Philip E. Gallagher made broadcasts over Ho's radio. American officers flew in and out of Hanoi, promising arms, money and political support to Ho chi Minh, the Communist, and turned in reports to Washington that Harold Isaacs might have dictated.

From Ho's Tong Bo committee in the north to Nguyen Binh's Nam Bo in the south flowed a constant stream of promises, directives and encouragement. Bai Vien, with his men installed as police auxiliaries, became the tax collector for his fief; but Nguyen Binh was distrustful of him. Bai Vien was jealous of his freedom. He was still the man of the marshes who had never been subjected to anyone; so Binh decided to break him. At first he tried to disperse Bai Vien's units. Then he tried to infiltrate them. In October 1946 Bai Vien made contact with the French, trying to insure his rear in the struggle that he knew was shaping with Nguyen Binh, but he was coolly received.

In 1947 Huynh phu So, the mad monk who founded and led the Hoa Hao sect (see chapter 7), was lured into a trap and killed by Nguyen Binh; Muoi Tri, Bai Vien's companion of a hundred raids, was sentenced to death at the time for trying to save the Hoa Hao leader. In the end Muoi Tri was not executed, but Binh's brutality drove Bai Vien to take his distance. Several times Binh's agents tried to kill Bai Vien, but each time he outwitted them. Then Binh decided on a variation of the ruse that permitted him to kill the Hoa Hao leader the year before.

On May 19, 1948, using Ho chi Minh's birthday as a pretext, Nguyen Binh set his trap for Bai Vien. He invited Bai Vien to come to his headquarters in the Plain of Junks for a party. For days Binh's troops had been on the move, quietly closing in, on the excuse that the French were planning an offensive. But there was nothing that Bai Vien did not know. He accepted the invitation and took 200 of his fiercest

bodyguards with him, with orders to surge to his rescue and kill Binh if Bai Vien gave the signal.

The Plain of Junks is a vast area. As far as the eye can see, no distinguishing point marks the place where low islands of reed-covered land end and reed-covered marsh begins. Junks appear to be floating on a field of reeds and from this appearance the plain derives its name. On one of the islands of this treacherous no-man's-land Nguyen Binh had his headquarters. Bai Vien walked into his tent. Binh said, "You have been betraying us but I pardon you," and proceeded to put his arms around Bai Vien and give him an accolade. At that moment the killers burst into the tent. Bai Vien cried, "To me!" and the fight was on.

Vien and his guards fought their way out, and all the way back to the village in the heart of the swamp from which they had come. Back to Binh Xuyen, the lair that gave them their name. Over a thousand of their band had had their throats cut by Binh's raiders while Bai Vien was at the "party." Many were disarmed in the first onslaught and offered a chance to rally to the Reds, and were then cut down in cold blood when they refused to desert their chief, Vien.

Bai Vien's reaction was swift and decisive. He sent the lieutenant who wrote letters for him—a young man named Lai huu Tai, dignified with the rank of private secretary—to present his compliments to the French commander and to offer, if given arms and ammunition, to clear the Vietminh out of his zone and maintain order. Furthermore, he agreed to support the French central government and accept the French Union.

On his own, and without waiting for the French reply, the reprisals started. Not only did the attack on himself demand an accounting, but there was that matter of a thousand loyal friends with their throats cut. The reprisals were terrible, for the bang conh tac, the intelligence cells which were the eyes and ears and the executioners of Bai Vien, spread like a net throughout the area occupied by the Vietminh. Bai Vien's intelligence cells were intact, and in one night they liquidated the entire network Nguyen Binh had so patiently erected. Each morning for weeks afterward the canals and arroyos around Saigon were cluttered with drifting bodies. No questions were asked by the French authorities. From that day, May 19, 1948, Bai Vien was to remain an implacable foe of the Communists!

Picture him: For years he had been a thorn in the side of the French. Any Vietnamese arrested for nationalist activity who had no money for defense, sent a letter to Bai Vien from

hand to hand through the underground as soon as he entered prison. If money and a lawyer could not obtain his release, Bai Vien, the pirate, the firsthand authority on prison deliveries, got him out. With every outwitting of the French his reputation had increased as a native Robin Hood. Now this same candid ex-pirate became the central pillar of the anticommunist fight in the Saigon area.

On June 13, 1948, his adherence to the government was formally announced, and within two months over eight hundred guerrillas deserted the Vietminh to join him. It was the beginning of the nationalist armed forces of the Binh Xuyen, with a discipline and an esprit de corps such as

has never been equalled since by any anti-Communist force in Vietnam. The possibilities of this "underground," forged and linked by the memories of so many years of danger together, surpassed the strictly military. A world of faceless agents, hideouts, arms caches, friends and associates that no one knew or suspected; infiltrators with their own lines running through every level and business; in sum, spies, collectors and executioners with their secret signs and passwords came with the Binh Xuyen.

It was the age-old secret society of Asia, with all the attributes of a modem arm and political party under a born leader. The leader of such a secret society can do anything. Lost in the immense ocean of Asian humanity, he enriches whom he pleases and kills those with whom he is at war. Bai Vien was at war with the Vietminh, and he conducted it more efficiently than they did, as his survival attests.

into the French fold, after Bai Vien, came the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai in turn, the two sects Nguyen Binh had irrevocably alienated by killing the leader of the former and trying to subjugate the latter.

Saigon, for all its French veneer, was a sprawling, dirty, oriental agglomeration of humans. When this ant-hill was turned over to Bai Vien and his auxiliary police it followed that he would tax its inhabitants in his fashion. He would naturally know what the dishonest citizens were up to and whether or not the honest ones were threatened. All this was accepted with Oriental fatalism. Those living in steaming rabbit-warren alleyways or passing their lives on junks had never known anything else, and under the Vietminh it had been infinitely worse. Since the money Bai Vien collected was used to support the army that out-fought, out-schemed and outmassacrea the Communists, that army was really self-supporting—the only one the American taxpayer was not require^ to keep in luxury.

BACKGROUND TO BETRAYAL

Two years after Bai Vien's turning against the Nam Bo, which is to say in 1950, the Grand Monde, the great gambling center in Cholon, the Chinese city, became his monopoly; but hereafter the name Bai Vien was to disappear. Bai Vien passed with the outlaw, to be replaced by Le van Vien, the respectable general, who cultivated the friendship of the Emperor Bao Dai after Bao Dai's return.

In April 1954 Lai huu Sang, brother of the private secretary whom Vien had sent as negotiator to the French, was named chief of the surete, so

successfully did the Binh Xuyen operate their anti-Red clean-up; and overnight from auxiliaries the Binh Xuyen became the police. Le van Vien's forces were not over three thousand men at the time, but they were devoted to him. And though Vien's loyalty to Bao Dai was probably based on self-interest when their strange friendship started, no one can deny that in the crucial test it was sincere. Such was the series of events that brought Le van Vien, after 1953, to leadership of a coalition including the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, and his emergence as a political power.

All this was made possible by the acquisition of the Grand Monde; for who ruled the Grand Monde, ruled Saigon and Cholon. Five hundred thousand piastres a day came out of the Grand Monde's neon-lit gambling halls and taxi dance floors for the French tax-collectors alone, to say nothing of unofficial graft that would carry the figure into millions. The economic power of the man who ruled the Grand Monde and with it Cholon and its some six hundred thousand Chinese, holding in their hands the distribution system of Vietnam, was considerable. It all accrued to jLe van Vien, the square-headed, powerful chief with fierce eyes, protruding jaw, and muscles that reminded one of a panther-—the man who loved animals, kept pet crocodiles and tigers, yet ordered Nguyen Binh's local committee wiped out with the calmness of a chess player moving a pawn.

Chinese merchants paid Le van Vien for every truck they sent out of Saigon; but the money went to pay his personal troops who patrolled the long road all the way to Cape St. Jacques over which their merchandise traveled.

Gradually Le van Vien's business interests expanded. With the capital at his disposal he developed the lumber industry in forest regions he had cleared of the Reds. Charcoal-producing plants were set up as a by-product. He built slaughterhouses, ran fleets of fishing and transport junks with one hand and opened markets for the fishermen with the other. Soon he had his own bus lines fanning out, and no one attacked them. He

became a principal negotiator for the Bank of Indochina.

The flood of piastres permitted him to recruit more troops and improve the living conditions of the followers on whom his power was built. Leadership of the famous "popular front," with the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects which we have mentioned, provided a party to serve as a political arm. Through it he was to become a national leader, moving into distant provinces, forming branches, absorbing older groups and, with the same

genius for administration he had shown as an illiterate leader of ruffians in the swamp, forming a political-military organization capable of stabilizing Cochin China.

And this is the country to which America sent Colonel Edward JLansdale to teach guerrilla warfare!

First Communist reaction to Bai Vien's rallying to the French and transition from outlaw to public servant as General Le van Vien, was a peremptory summons from the Tong Bo, the dread committee surrounding Ho chi Minh, for General Nguyen Binh to present himself.

As for the Cao Dai, it was French General Latour who approved bringing into the war against Ho chi Minh the private army of the Cao Dai pope. The Vietminh were like water; they were everywhere and nowhere. The country was their sponge, and Latour decided to wrest a cleared space from the fluid enemy. Latour had informers by the thousands. The intelligence service of the French army spent piastres by the millions. Information was exchanged and traded on a regular market, but most of it was false. The truth was too dangerous. Leaks invariably led to the honest informer's getting his throat cut. So in 1948 the same Cao Dai forces that had in 1945 embarked on a massacre of the French at the behest of the Japanese, were brought into the fight as allies against the Vietminh.

In 1945 the Japanese had armed the Cao Dai and moved their flying columns into Saigon when defeat became inevitable. Cao Dai leaders never doubted for a minute that if all the foreigners in Cochin China had their throats cut, the country would fall to them. The screams that punctuated that frightful night in the spring of 1945, in Saigon will never be forgotten by the Europeans who survived it. Yet the Cao Dai pope seemed such a gentle little man when one sipped tepid champagne with him at ten in the morning! He was known as His Holiness, Pope Pham cong Tac. Beside him, in immense dignity with his flowing beard, sat the Bao Dao, defender of the faith, the last time the author visited them in their place of exile in Pnom Penh, Cambodia.

Incredible as it may seem, within thirty years the religion that started with experiments in spiritualism by a bored civil servant named Ngo van Chieu, whiling away his time with table-rapping in an isolated island post in the Gulf of Siam became a national force.

The world of the little Vietnamese is inhabited by strange spirits. Everywhere about him is a sense of mystery, and before the mystery his impulse is to band together with other Vietnamese to form a brotherhood bound by inner secrets expressed in obscure symbols. Because the all-seeing eye became one of the symbols of the Cao Dai sect, students of occult societies have attempted to link Vietnam's powerful sect with older orders and offshoots of the Illuminati. Actually, to do so is to accord it a genealogy it does not have. The men who sat around Ngo van Chieu's table in 1919 while he communicated with the spirits by means of the "corbeille k bee, a primitive, beak-shaped gadget holding a pencil which in the hands of the adept communicated the daily message, were minor functionaries with at least rudimentary French educations. Victor Hugo was the literary giant of their class, so it was only natural that he should communicate with them. The symbol of the all-seeing eye was familiar to them. They had read of the grand Orient lodge of the free Masonry in their French history.

Long before the master with whom they were in contact identified himself on Christmas Eve of 1925 as "Cao Dai, the Pure August One, the Oldest of the Buddhas, Sakyamuni and Jesus Christ," Chieu had plundered the grand Orient of its symbol, without any deep knowledge of that secret lodge or any other.

When Chieu got back to Saigon his first important convert was a hard-drinking, wildly gambling reprobate named Le van Trung, who overnight threw himself into Cao Daism with such fervor that he seized its direction from Chieu. Trung became the sect's first pope. Till his death, or "disincamation" in Cao Dai phraseology, in 1934, the sect never ceased to expand. Then came Pham cong Tac, the former customs official.

Asia was in a state of flux. The nha-que, the toiling little man of Asia's human anthills, was rejecting many of his old superstitions. And Pope Pham cong Tac was a genius at administration. His discipline and leadership hardened the organization. Disjointed bands had protected the sect against incursions by Vietminh guerrillas and the French. Pham cong Tac welded them into an army, the only army outside the Vietminh that possessed all the elements necessary for a crusade: a

mysticism, an ideal, a large following, a cohesive organization and courageous fighters. In sum, an instrument of domination. And Cao Dai ambitions were boundless. To push ahead, to gain more strength, to possess

more followers, to control more ground, to acquire more wealth, by duplicity, treachery, brutality or religion, was their aim.

Political organizations were suppressed by the French police, but police were powerless against a religion. Under Pope Pham cong Tac the Cao Dai followers bled the Japanese for money as a special auxiliary force. Prince Cong De, a cousin of Bao Dai, was brought back from Japan to serve as a puppet, and the Cao Dai were hired to acclaim him. Without a qualm they swung over to Cong De as long as the money lasted. From the Japanese they swung to the Vietminh, till the Vietminh threatened the Cao Dai pope; then they became the allies of the French, and their holy see of Tay Ninh, with its great Cai Dai temple, became a pillar in the anti-Vietminh struggle.

Delirious bands, impervious to danger and fighting as though under a hypnotic spell, out-fought the chidois (sectors) of the Vietminh wherever they found them. Soldiers of the pope were suicides from the moment they started. They killed, and died as they killed, as though life were of no importance. If the French suffered an ambush, word was sent to the Cao Dai pope and a flying brigade cleared the area. What they did with their prisoners the French never knew. Some were herded back in columns, closely guarded lest the Vietminh try to liberate them. At the end of each column marched security officers. Between vehicles moved the shock troops. In the center came mortar bearers, accompanied by their ammunition coolies. Pushed on by bayonets were the prisoners, assassination squads of the Vietminh. The villages they had terrorized henceforth belonged to the Cao Dai.

On either side of the route of march, phantoms moved through the brush, scouts by the hundreds armed only with a hand grenade to protect the flanks and alert the column in the event of attack. Along the road an efficient alarm system operated.

It was mass mysticism, moving with modern arms. When a French general could not find the enemy he had only to call on the Cao Dai pope. A flying brigade would be dispatched, and in three months they would have a fort, the Vietminh would be gone—wiped out to a man. The nha-ques, the country people, converted to Cao Daism, would be working as spies or toiling as Cao Dai slaves to feed and serve the new organization. Each time a Vietminh drive threatened a pacified

area, France's General Latour had only to give the Cao Dai a bit more money, a few more machine guns, and Vietminh implantation was succeeded by that of the Cao Dai.

In the end the general realized that in areas where the Vietminh had been, a new problem presented itself. Every youngster playing beside a road, every workman in a field, the woman selling produce or weaving a basket, the decrepit beggar lying beside a tree—every human being, no matter how young or old, how weak or humble—was a link not only in the elaborate Cao Dai warning system against the Vietminh but also against the French. When the general staff realized this, the delicate game of balance and counterbalance started.

It was not by accident of geography that the Vietminh claimed and were able to obtain the northern half of Vietnam while the southern half remained free. Had Ho chi Minh succeeded in establishing Communist power in the south as effectively as he had in the north, he could have claimed the whole country. That he failed was due as much to the three forces (Binh Xuyen, Cao Dai, and Hoa Hao) we destroyed as it was to the French. Hoa Hao guerrillas were the terror of the Communists in Western Cochin China and throughout the whole Mekong Delta and its waterways fanning out to the sea. Where the Hoa Hao did not operate and where the French expeditionary force itself refrained from venturing in Cochin China, the Cao Dai sect ensured security.

And in the labyrinth of Saigon's putrid quarters, as Raymond Cartier put it, "the Binh Xuyen waged a ceaseless, bloody, ferocious war, killing the Vietminh like a terrier exterminating rats, while Diem left his dear country at the first sound of a cannon and prepared to return with the superb dogmatism and understanding of politico-human realities acquired in exile.

"There is no doubt that Le van Vien desired to rise above his past and acquire respectability. Had he and his Binh Xuyen not turned against the Vietminh," Cartier reflected, "no one dares think of what we would have done to maintain order in Saigon."

There were those who did dare pose that question, and the alternative they saw was a Saigon terrorized by Nguyen Binh.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NGUYEN BINH AND THE HOA HAO

Nguyen Binh was not his real name. It is doubtful that anyone knows what it was. He first attracted attention as a young incorrigible,

distinguishing himself by lawlessness and assuming, before the countless police who had cause to arrest him, the name of the village in upper Tonkin where he was born. And as Nguyen Binh he conducted his war against society. In his teens he worked as a laundryman on a Messageries Maritimes boat. At twenty he was sent to Poulo-Condore prison for revolutionary activity; and this prison, the Alcatraz of Indochina, contained the most cunning, ruthless Communists Russia ever trained to spread revolution. There Binh learned the technique of what was to become his life work. In 1934, on his release, he contacted the underground cell leaders for whom the hardened veterans on the inside had given him messages.

The underground dispatched him to a chief in Canton who in turn passed him on to comrades training military and political leaders in the Wharnpo school of the Kuomintang. When the Kuomintang ceased to please him, Binh moved to Moscow and there, through World War H, he worked with the Russians. A point to bear in mind as one studies everything this iron-willed murderer did thereafter is that in Binh we find the perfect example of the tool of the Russians, able to say in all honesty that he was never a Communist. For Nguyen Binh, to the end, never belonged to the party. It was always as a nationalist, that shining, overworked word, that he worked.

When the time was ripe, Moscow dispatched him on a mission to Ho chi Minh in Indochina, back to the country of his birth. It was in 1945, and Ho chi Minh sent him south to a post near the river Binh had last sailed down as a laundryman, with full powers to organize and direct a war.

The murderous guerrilla killings in forests and rice paddies that took their toll on France for the next nine years, until Pierre Mendes-France ceded the honor of protecting Indochina to the Americans, was the work of Nguyen Binh and the

machine he perfected. The real Communist overlords were in the north with “Uncle Ho,” the idol ot Newsweek's Harold Isaacs and the long line of OSS majors proudly bearing Uncle Ho’s autographed gold cigarette cases; but Ho and General Giap with their Tong Bo council and their commissars, were far-ofl: names to those in the south. Nguyen Binh, with his sun helmet,

his dark glasses and a Colt revolver in a holster on his hip, was the "nationalist" designated to be communism's warlord in Cochin China.

Between 1945 and 1948, when he set his trap for Bai Vien and committed the unpardonable sin—he set up a trap and failed—Binh murdered more people, with more brutality, than any Oriental since Genghis Khan, and did it as America's protege as well as Ho chi Minh's and the Russian's. His base, from the start, was a constantly moving one, in the same Plain of Junks where he tried to kill Bai Vien, at the very gates of Saigon. Fanatic, cruel, generous when he wanted to be and pitiless when there was no political reason to be otherwise, Binh drove himself as mercilessly as his men.

His first move in Cochin China was to form an elite guard, armed with the best automatic weapons Ho chi Minh had received from the Americans in the first days of our anticolonialist crusade. Radio communications equipment was forthcoming from the same source. And around him formed the inevitable nucleus of Communist government, the Nam Bo, which was the southern equivalent of the Tong Bo surrounding Ho. Under Nguyen Binh, until his work was accomplished and the Tong Bo ready to liquidate him, the Nam Bo exercised almost complete autonomy from the Red council in the north.

Yet only once, at the beginning of his career under Ho, did Binh ever protest a Red order. It was in 1944, at Hanoi, while Binh was being groomed for the southern command. He and Giap were systematically massacring the old anti-French terrorists who had inspired Binh in his youth —men of the Yen-Bay uprising in 1930 and all the battles of the period of Binh's apprenticeship in what the Rooseveltians were to dignify as nationalism.

"Listen," General Giap said to him, "You are an intelligent nationalist. You must stand with us, even though we liquidate the comrades of your youth. We have to do this because they are potential traitors. You knew these men when they were heroes. Now they are nothing; they have been outpaced by history. Yet, because they accomplished something years ago, they want power. They are not worth it. So to get power there

is only one thing they can do: they will collaborate—either with the Kuomintang or the French. They have to go."

Once Binh was brought to accept this reasoning he was fit for anything. His capital in the Plain of Junks became an invisible city. Everything was

mobile—his camp, printing presses, arsenals for making crude rifles, bombs and grenades. Bamboo-built equipment for whole crafts and industries could be dismantled, piled in junks and transported through a labyrinth of canals and drainage passages to another reedhidden mound of earth at a moment's notice. A constant stream of messengers, spies, assassins, political commissars and tax collectors scurried between Saigon and wherever Binh's headquarters happened to be.

In Binh's eyes, as with all revolutionaries basing their power on terror whether in Algeria or Cochin China, no man had a right to be neutral. If he is neutral, kill him. Suspicion, whether or not supported by a shred of proof, led to execution. Each day Binh's underground transmitter Voice of the Nam Bo, spread hate and terror in Saigon by reading the list of names of those marked for assassination. His posters, pamphlets, sheets and whole newspapers circulated through Saigon at night. His administrative organization divided Cochin China into three parts: In the eastern section were the rubber plantations, the jute plantations and great producing domains in the forest. Nothing that would or could produce tax money was destroyed. In the west he milked the rice producers. In the center of his world lay Saigon, Cholon, and the Plain of Junks, and here Binh's ‘‘ministry of finance,'' headed by himself, with a bookkeeping system as meticulous as any bank's, collected taxes and operated on the open market, providing the bulk of revenue necessary to keep Ho chi Minh happy in the north and support six regular regiments in the Saigon area.

When one considers the grip of Binh's organization in the very heart of what was French Indochina, then the dumping of the whole problem of trying to cope with this force into the lap of Le van Vien and his ex-pirates becomes understandable. And in spite of the murders, the pitiless shake-downs and the brutalities, the little people admired Nguyen Binh, for the Oriental worships strength even when it expresses itself in the form of cruelty and its victim may be himself.

The early months of 1947 were Binh's high spot. But in spite of his authoritarianism three groups escaped control: the Hoa Hao waged war on him, while the Cao Dai sect and the Binh Xuyen, though cooperating as tax collectors, refused to yield an inch of their independence. The idea of insubordination

and the possibility of treason became an obsession with Binh. In bis fanaticism he cut down the best of his lieutenants because of thoughts he fancied they were hiding in their minds. This was when he decided to break the Hoa Hao by assassinating their leader, Huynh phu So.

A massive mountain range rears itself in lower Cochin China, where for years convicts, rebels, hermits, philosophers and anyone wishing safety or seclusion fled for refuge. This is called the "Seven Mountains" area, and the superstitious accord it a mystic power. In the early twenties Huynh phu So, the son of a village notable, went there to cure himself of epileptic fits. Living in a cave with a hermit he spent his days in meditation, prayer and repentance. In 1926 the hermit died and Huynh phu So, or Huynh, as we shall call him, went down from the mountain, cured of his epilepsy but completely mad. He was emaciated and his unkempt hair hung to his shoulders. Wandering from village to village he preached to the nha-ques, as Indochina's teeming millions are called. Within the depths of the nha-ques, with their superstitions and their macabre dreams of a continual dance of death, he struck a chord.

In his trances he preached of a renovated Buddhism but talked of a devastating war in which the European would be defeated. Whether or not he was in the pay of the Japanese at this time is uncertain. Later they were to advance him and use him. One night in 1939 he came out of one of the fitful trances that inspired wonder and admiration in the ignorant nha-ques who watched him, and proclaimed that a revelation had come to him: He was die living God. Through Chauduc, Cantho and the Long Xuyen areas his preachings spread. Peasants, small land-owners and tradespeople prostrated themselves before him. Soon his power spread to Rach Gia and Mytho and his followers numbered a million as he wandered, performing miracles and healing the sick.

What they did not know was that the Japanese were giving him the quinine he put in potions to reduce their fevers. As his reputation grew his messages became more terrible. In his wake trailed a stream of monks he was training to spread his word. As the Japanese star descended he began acquiring arms for his followers and a new note appeared. The faithful must wipe out their enemies. Anyone who killed ten Frenchmen would go straight to heaven, but the Vietminh, being infidels, were enemies also. In the frenzy of their death cult, Huynh's converts ambushed French convoys

to get more arms so that they could kill Frenchmen on one hand and Communists on the other. The Vietminh held the villages and the Hoa Hao

the rice paddies, and between them blood flowed like water.

In Cantho, the great rice market on the Mekong River, Nguyen Binh's tribunals sent thousands of Hoa Hao to death with a bullet in the back of the head. Thousands more were thrown into the river with their arms bound behind them. Through it all, Huynh escaped in seemingly miraculous ways, which supported his claim to being immortal. Any faithful who killed ten Vietminh, he proclaimed, would mount directly to a paradise superior to that reserved for killers of Frenchmen. Alienation of the Hoa Hao was the first of Binh's great mistakes.

For two years this butchery went on; then Binh decided to rectify his error in the only way that was natural to him. In April 1947 he sent the living god a message of friendship, saying, "Come to me in the Plain of Junks. Let us embrace and stop this fratricidal struggle and unite against the French." With the message was a safe conduct.

Huynh saw opening before him a golden opportunity to convert the Vietminh. Some say that he was cut in two by a burst of machine gun fibre as he entered Binh's camp. Others claim Binh dragged out his victory, then lopped off Huynh's head with a scimitar, the military symbol of his sect. In the months that followed there was no attempt to avenge Huynh's death, for his followers were convinced that he was immortal. His generals, under the redoubtable Tran van Sioai, were embarrassed. They knew there had been an ambush, but they were at a loss as to how to deal with the religious side of the affair.

It was at that time that the French took stock of the situation. The Hoa Hao were capable of savagery, but in the manner of children. Their ferocity was an uncomplicated, natural thing. Better to treat them as naive children and forgive the past. After all, as guerrilla warriors they were second to none. What if their religion had degenerated into an anarchy of schisms and their military forces into feudal armies under generals who regarded them as personal prerogatives? The blunt fact remained that Tran van Sioai had cleared the Vietminh from western Cochin China.

A French officer named Campadieu took his life in his hands and walked into the Hoa Hao camp to open negotiations. Overnight they

became respectable and insatiable as French allies, financed, equipped and heaped with honors. One of their fiercest leaders was a frail consumptive named Bacut, who had hacked off his index finger in front of his troops to show how he would cut off the heads of Frenchmen.

Back in Hanoi the Tong Bo was dissatisfied with the sense

less alienation of such warriors. From that moment Nguyen Binh was on thin ice. Perhaps it was to redeem himself that he attempted the same ruse against Bai Vien a year later, but this time he went too far, for along with the error of driving an enemy of the French into forming an alliance with them, he made the unforgivable mistake of failing. A committee was sent south by the Tong Bo to judge Binh in his own camp. With the frightful coldness of Marxist reasoning and precision they charged him with failing to analyze the situation correctly, with giving in to egotism and by his own self-intoxication, risking the ultimate victory of the people.

Binh went through the painful process of auto-criticism. He admitted his errors and begged forgiveness. And since his work was not yet finished they spared him, but the next three years of his life were a nightmare. He was as inextricably caught in the merciless machine as the humblest nha-que in his ranks. One by one his comrades were weeded out, liquidated, to be replaced by a new man sent by the Tong Bo. Always it was to improve the efficiency of the machine, and the executioner was always Nguyen Binh. At last, in 1951 the time came when he could no longer satisfy his masters. They summoned him to appear in Hanoi, before the Tong Bo. For weeks he stalled. At last he started, only to be killed by the French along the way. There were those in the expeditionary corps who suspected that the tip-off which reached their hands was sent by Ho and Giap themselves. Having Binh intercepted by a French column was a more satisfactory method of execution, for the man was still an idol to many in the south. He had spilled so much French blood there; and this, to the Vietminh of Cochin China, was the measure of his greatness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GOVERNMENT AMERICA SUPPORTED

October 10, 1954, was the date set for French withdrawal from Hanoi, capital of North Vietnam. It brought a horde of refugees to the south. First there were the Catholics, herded in a mass exodus by their priests; then the

Buddhists, and after them in the ever increasing flood went hundreds more who for one reason or another dreaded to face life under the Reds. The American navy transported thousands to their new homes in the south, and the French air force plied back and forth in a shuttle service, evacuating thousands more.

Eight years later a French commandant who supported his friends and was charged with refusing to abandon Moslems who had served with them in Algeria, was still seared by the memory of what he had seen in Indochina. "As our boat pulled away, taking us out to the ship in the harbor," he testified, "I watched Vietnamese women wade after us, hold their babies up to soldiers in the boats and then, deliberately, slide under the water and drown, and I swore that I would never take part in such betrayal again."

By January of 1955 this human wave was at its height, a trek of misery which, though they had nothing to do with it, the remote man in Independence Palace and his family were to exploit propaganda-wise in America, and politically at home, for years to come. Either because his unstable temper happened to be lashing out at the French at the time, or because his American apologists needed a whipping boy to blame for the growing opposition against him, Diem chose the moment when the plight of the fleeing refugees was most desperate to go into one of his tirades and demand that the French air force halt its airlift.

Discontent was rife, but again American agents on the spot interpreted each new warning sign of impending trouble in a way that would support what they were out to sell. Freedom was what the Vietnamese wanted, but instead of freedom increasing with independence, each passing week made the old days look better. Yet the American team had a ready answer; It fanned the hate campaign against the departing colonialists,

and said everything would be all right as soon as the standard of living was raised and the colonialists were gone. This meant more American aid wrung out of patient Americans for a people who were hitherto satisfied with what they had, since they had never known anything better, but who were soon destined to become bitter complainers at the sight of a favored few becoming rich while they remained poor.

From the first, each estimate given us of cause and effect was false, but the evil geniuses responsible seemed to thrive on errors. Under President Truman two "empires" outside of but parallelling the Department of State became firmly rooted. They were out Central Intelligence Agency and a burdensome Foreign Aid Administration. Then came Eisenhower, who added the United States Information Agency. Each administration felt itself duty bound to make government more topheavy by adding another "empire." Under Kennedy it was the Peace Corps, touted as volunteers to teach backward peoples to plant trees and thatch roofs, but by August 1964, openly advertising itself in Reader's Digest as spreaders of the "modern revolution."

In Vietnam each of the parallel organizations we installed soon equaled, man for man, the personnel in our over-swollen embassy. And every eager beaver in the ponderous, overlapping services was out to play kingmaker on one hand and on the other to assure America that things were going well.

For the South Vietnamese things were not going well at all. For one thing, after taking over the army Diem and Nhu tightened their grip too suddenly. Already the Cao Dai pope and the leaders of the Hoa Hao regretted their venality and wished they could backtrack to the days of General Hinh. But it was too late. In February 1955, one of the military pillars on which they depended, General Trinh minh The of the Cao Dai, was enticed, with some two million dollars for bait, to move into Diem's camp with 2,500 of his personal followers. By mid-March the night arrests and rumors of kidnappings and assassinations could no longer be ignored.

To the nation clamoring for freedom, while we promised better living standards and proceeded to enrich those who were important as yes-men, a truth became evident: under a tyrant who uses an army as a political force, only armed opposition is possible. So the Vietnamese turned back once more to the old national front of the Binh Xuyen and the sects— the same coalition that could have saved them seven months before when they had the army with them, had the sects not sold out for American money.

Time magazine's account of this second crisis in its famous Diem biography number of April 4, 1955, should be held up to irate America when the grim reckoning comes. It is typical of the managed news which magazine buyers were given when the nation cried for information. The Binh Xuyen, erroneously described as a sect, and its two allies were denounced as nothing more than "an exotic consortium of religious fanatics,

feudal warlords, uniformed hoodlums and racket bosses bound loosely behind an ambitious general who keeps pet crocodiles."

Time told Americans that these groups, deprived of the subsidies and prerogatives accorded them by the French colonials, had become dangerous. It was that simple. Time evoked indignation by adding that such a bunch had dared deliver an ultimatum to the man we were backing. "Reorganize your government within five days. Replace it with one that is suitable," they had said. An honest reporter would have told what sort of government the Vietnamese were rejecting, and a thinking public would have asked. Let us turn a spotlight on the rubber-stamp ministers Diem and his brother brought together to form what CBS correspondent Peter Kalischer in his Collier's magazine article of July 6, 1956, called "Diem's broad National Revolutionary Movement."

At the top of the pyramid, as premier and minister of the interior (national police) sat Diem himself. "He impressed no one as a man of destiny," Peter Kalischer said of him. As a matter of fact he wasn't; but a chimpanzee with a million and a half American dollars a day behind him could not fail to survive. Brother Nhu held no official post. He and his wife exerted influence in their own ways from the wings on the unstable ascetic who posted a sign saying "Women keep out" on his office door. A psychiatrist once attributed Diem's misogynism to impotency. Whatever the reason, he was uneasy in the presence of all women save the iron-willed sister-in-law who alternately terrorized him with her tempers and cajoled him as a mother would a small boy, patting his face and straightening his tie.

The cabinet fanned out below the family was heavily weighted with men of undeniable Communist sympathies and connections. The ministers who did not have pro-Communist backgrounds were generally inept nonentities.

There were two ministers of state. The posts were lucrative without carrying any power. Tran van Sioai, the old Hoa Hao general with the fierce moustache, and Nguyen than Phuong, the Cao Dai general who had been bought off with him, were still enjoying the honor of being addressed as "excellency"

when the ultimatum was delivered. When Diem had no further need for them they were arrested and stripped of what they had amassed by "playing ball." There was a difference, however: The money received when they betrayed their fellow nationalists had been paid by America; when it was confiscated, it was returned to Ngo dinh Nhu.

The minister of foreign affairs was Tran van Do, Madame Chuong's brother-in-law, but he resigned during the crisis and was replaced by Vu van Mau, a northerner and former supporter of the Vietminh who returned from abroad to accept a post in the cabinet. Two meaningless posts of secretary of state for the interior were created for Huynh van Nhiem, representing the Hoa Hao, and Nguyen ngoc Cac, representing the Cao Dai. Both were unknowns and a year later were under arrest.

The minister of national defense, Mr. Ho thong Minh, who was soon to flee to Paris, was a former army supplier for Ho chi Minh. Mr. Tran trung Dung, the son-in-law of Diem's sister, occupied the defense ministry as the April 1955 crisis approached. Dung's sister followed Madame Nhu's example and made a good thing out of selling export licenses and purchasing properties from Europeans whom she had frightened into selling (at a fraction of the value of their property) by having her brother sign an army requisition order for their homes. When his sister had closed a deal, Dung released the property.

The minister of national economy was replaced in mid-1956 by Nguyen ngoc Tho, whom Nguyen van Tam had arrested on October 25, 1945, as a Communist. Tho was ambassador to Japan until Diem arbitrarily made him both vice-president of the country and minister of economy. His son, menacing students as leader of the Vietminh Students' Association in Paris, was in constant communication with his father. As minister of economy, Tho had hanging over him the problem of getting ready cash for a government that leaked like a sieve; and his solution for doing this is generally conceded to have emanated from the sharp brain of Madame Nhu. Putting the ideas of Nhu and his wife into practice was what ministers were for.

Tho signed an order requiring a heavy deposit from all firms applying for import-export permits. Such permits went through the hands of Nhu and his wife. The amount demanded forced all but the biggest firms out of business. When Diem's 1956 nationalization decrees—forcing the Chinese

to become Vietnamese citizens or lose their property—paralyzed the economy, the importers in turn were forced to the wall and demanded

their deposits back. Those deposits had already gone into somebody's account. Not a cent was repaid, and a wave of suicides followed. The Saigon newspaper Dan Chung reported in February 1958 that a cloth merchant, unable to meet his bills because of Tho's old decree, had poured gasoline over himself and applied a match, burning himself alive in a place known as La Pointe des Blaguers (Point of the Jokesters). No American paper reported it; the bankrupt Chinese had no press.

Imports piled up in customs sheds. Merchants were unable to bail it out, and business ground to a standstill. Rumors of exchange speculation and wholesale graft in the government's exchange of new banknotes for the old currency undermined confidence in the piastre. When the Chinese were barred from rice distribution, rice prices soared. Asia's economy is based on the rice standard, and a leader's popularity is based on the price of rice.

With mixed emotions—sympathy for Tho bred of the manin-the-street's hatred of the president's brother, and contempt for Tho for remaining in such a government—Saigon citizens repeated stories concerning his treatment by Diem's family. Nhu was said to have slapped Tho's face for refusing to sign an export permit at less than the customary kickback.

In any government the minister of public works disposes of the first requisite for acquiring a political following, i.e., he disposes of jobs. And if his patronage provides his entourage with a living, it also permits him to know how much each henchman, down to the lowest pick-and-shovel worker, is making and, accordingly, how much he can be made to kick in. The money for public works in South Vietnam, it goes without saying, came from American aid, through the hands of an American aid administrator named Vu van Thai, a high Communist lieutenant until the Geneva accord of 1954.

The public works minister was Mr. Tran le Quang, a former Ho chi Minh collaborator who had served as president of the Association of Vietminh Students in France. Quang replaced Tran van Bach when Bach became implicated in a rice scandal. General Le van Vien's intelligence service reported that the smooth functioning of Quang's works program was due to a Ho chi Minh order that there be no trouble lest attention be drawn to the whole setup and a scrutiny launched which might reveal that a Red cell was being supported by U.S. aid. Those unable to get in on public

works graft, or resentful over its being run by a former Ho chi Minh lieutenant, were afraid to talk—for reasons which we will make clear.

The American aid administrator working hand-in-hand with

Quang was, as we have mentioned, Mr. Vu van Thai. Thai accompanied Diem to America in early 1957. In mid-1957 he made franc exchange available to pay for a printing job in Paris handled by Minh Tan Press, a Communist printing plant at 7 rue Guenegaud. Minh Tan Press was run by Vu van Thai's old comrade in arms, Nguyen ngoc Bich, the Communist engineer who sabotaged bridges in Cochin China for Ho chi Minh during the war against the French.

Vu van Thai flew to America on October 3, 1958, to talk to high State Department and foreign aid officials in Washington. Other talks followed at Michigan State University concerning assistance (propaganda and advisors) being furnished Vietnam by that institution. Main aim of the mission, however, was more money, in lump sums. No mention of this trip was made in the American press. (Officials controlling such information were well acquainted with Vo van Thai's record.) In 1960 Thai became Harvard's "authority on Vietnam" and Vietnamese observer at UN, where he remained until supplanted by Madame Chuong, when Madame Chuong was edged out of Saigon by her daughter.

The credit office chief in the American aid section of the national bank was immediately above Vu van Thai in Vietnam's hierarchial structure, for all that Thai was the minister. The credit office chief was Albert Pham ngoc Thao, whose unsavory record was second only to that of Diem's minister of information. Before the Geneva accord of 1954, Thao was Ho chi Minh's intelligence chief in Cochin China. In 1949 he married a militant Communist, sister of the well-known Vietminh professor, Pham Thieu. Thao's father openly headed the Vietminh league in Paris while Thao's brother, Gaston, worked as Ho chi Minh's right-hand man in Hanoi. It was through Thao and his brother Gaston that Diem's brother Nhu maintained contact with the Vietminh through the years of America's great delusion from 1954 to 1964.

Along with his credit office job, Thao also headed Nhu's secret police, a position for which his years with Ho chi Minh eminently fitted him. Every business office, every ministry, every group, and practically every household had within it somewhere a Nhu agent, informing on his neighbors, his superiors and his fellow workmen. No man dared make a

move or breathe a word that might be distorted by an informer seeking to gain “face” and advancement.

Nationalists claimed that Thao, with his 1946-1954 Communist intelligence experience and contacts to draw on, was able to track down, imprison and ruin any non-Communist

opposition to Diem. At the same time he frustrated their attempts to rally deserters from the Red camp. Those wishing to quit Ho chi Minh and go home were discouraged from doing so by the spectacle of their friends being arrested by Thao and other former Communists in Diem’s government the minute they returned for acts they had committed while under the orders of those same men. (Through 1961 Joe Alsop was to eulogize Albert Pham ngoc Thao in his columns. See for example Alsop’s columns in the European edition of the New York Herald Tribune for April 11, 12, 14 and 18 of 1961. Not until the eve of Nhu’s assassination did Alsop ever admit that the brothers Ngo dinh were in contact with Ho chi Minh, and then ii was with the explanation that Nhu had changed, that bad treatment by the Americans and knowledge that we were about to dump him forced him in desperation to try to negotiate with the Reds behind our backs.)

It should now be clear why no Vietnamese dared express disapproval of the minister of public works.

The post of secretary of state for the presidency was filled by Nuyen dinh Thuan, a northerner friend of Diem’s nephew, after Nguyen huu Chau was forced to flee to Deauville, France, for trying to divorce Madame Nhu’s sister on grounds of adultery, a matter on which Madame Nhu forestalled repetition in the future by outlawing divorce as soon as she gained admittance to the national assembly.

All that anyone knew of Lam le Trinh, the new minister of the interior, whom Diem named to take pressure off himself was that as a magistrate he had been in trouble for misappropriating funds. Tran chanh Thanh, the minister of propaganda and information who replaced Pham xuan Thai, the Cao Dai, had administered “justice” for the Vietminh in eighteen provinces before 1954, and had done it so brutally that his name was still used to frighten children. Thanh’s wife was up to her neck in business deals with Madame Nhu. The minister of education, Than huu The, confided that he would like to get out but was afraid to because of Ngo dinh Nhu. There was no particular grievance against Ha van Vuong, the minister of finance,

except that he was an unknown northerner holding a post which the southerners regarded as rightly theirs. Vuong succeeded an earlier, unpopular appointee named Tran huu huong. On the other hand, the agriculture and agrarian reform ministry was occupied by Le van Dong, who was a southerner with no qualifications for the job and who had a scandalous private life against him.

The minister of reconstruction and planning came from

central Vietnam and was a shining example of the cabinet Time defended. He was Hoang Hung, a former Vietminh who had studied to be an architect. Nguyen van Tam told this author that, when he was director-general of national security, he once raided Hung's home and found the cellar used for a Vietminh arms cache. After loading a truck with guns and Communist tracts, Tam decided to investigate the house next door, which Hung had built on his property and rented to a friend. The friend turned out to be Le van Liem, a leading Saigon terrorist for the Vietminh. Revolvers, cartridges and knives were found in the wall. On opening a closet which was filled with Communist pamphlets, Tam heard a faint rapping. Behind a secret door in the back of the closet they found a rich Chinese drug manufacturer, owner of the Nhi Thien Duong (Second Paradise) pharmacy, who was being held for ransom. So much for Hoang Hung's qualifications as a planner. He replaced Nguyen van Thoai, the brother-in-law of Diem's sister.

If the reader's head is swimming as he peruses the descriptions of these ministers of government with their strange names, let him pause for a moment before he puts the whole confusing business out of his mind as not worth the effort. For that is just what the men to whom American conservatives looked for information did for nine long years, while South Vietnam rotted. One of the most respected columnists in Washington refused to look into the Vietnam picture. "America isn't interested in what is happening out there," he protested. It was not true. America was devouring an ocean of newsprint on South Vietnam—tripe put out by the United States Information Service, the State Department, and the most despicable high-pressure public relations campaign ever put over on a civilized nation. But the men and publishers to whom thinking Americans looked for sound information would not make the mental effort to

familiarize themselves with the area and its leaders so they could do an intelligent report.

A host of questions present themselves as we note the indignation of Time, April 4, 1955, that anyone should dare deliver an ultimatum to Diem, demanding he throw out his cabinet. For we have scrutinized the cabinet Diem's countrymen refused to accept. The first question that arises: Would Time have cleared U. S. Communist leader Eugene Dennis and the Rosenberg atom spies for comparable posts in America? Then why did Time campaign for Diem's crew in South Vietnam? Why did Time and the rest of our press hold up Diem's

suPPosed piety and honesty as a sheet to cover the thoroughly unhealthy structure beneath him, as though the claims to two virtues were sufficient arguments to accord the worst of associates a blanket acceptance?

CHAPTER NINE

THE BELEAGUERED MAN

"The beleaguered man sat in Freedom Palace," the Time issue of April 4, 1955, glibly told a public longing desperately for assurance that somewhere we were winning. Pointedly Time's Far East correspondent noted that "a wooden crucifix, a picture of the Virgin, a slide projector, a gaudy spittoon, books entitled Social Justice and Thoughts of Ghandi" were among the possessions about him. On the desk lay the ultimatum from the sects and the Binh Xuyen.

"An odd procession passed in and out of the palace doors for hours on end to deal with the crisis—three of the man's brothers, one in the cloth of a Roman Catholic bishop; his beautiful, politics-minded sister-in-law; U. S. diplomats and U. S. military officers in mufti; eye-rubbing ministers of state summoned from their sleep for emergency consultations."

From the first, in a paragraph stacked to assure Diem the sympathy of devout Catholics, all shades of liberals and lovers of the underdog, the reader was bound, tied and delivered. But analyze it; These three brothers and the "politics-minded sister-in-law," there was the rub. One had to be in Saigon, or a conservative in Washington under the reign of the Kennedys, to appreciate the extent to which Vietnam was a family affair. The eye-rubbing ministers of state were window-dressing, told to get out of bed and come and nod before the Americans.

Accompanying the Time report was a photograph showing Presidential Envoy Lawton Collins, Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson, Foster Dulles and Diem, grinning from ear to ear.

Time said that leaders were hard to find. Of course they were, with Nhu's secret police driving them into hiding. "The French, striving to maintain by fair means and by sly means a remnant of influence and profit in the land they had exploited for seven decades, obstruct him [Diem] with the wily rear-guard maneuvers of colonialism," continued the Time story. Such lines, popular as they were in America, are likely to cost us dearly before our turn at the receiving end in South Vietnam is done.

Time went on, "A quick survey of the hinterlands showed that Diem's nationalist regime could count on the electoral support of no more than a fourth of the villages. The rest leaned for communism, or at least leaned against the unknown, unproved regime in Saigon."

If the Saigon regime was unknown, why go on with the pretext that anyone but the new-social-revolution liberals in Washington had foisted it on the country? And in that case why call it nationalist? Anything, it seemed, was justified by intimating that a portion of the two-thirds of the country admittedly against "our" man were Communists. This made our abrogation of the right of self-determination democratic.

Two pages later Time's writer expressed Tran van Do's resentment that the Vietnamese (whom Diem had told not to fight the Communists) were not consulted when the French made peace the previous year. "Back in Saigon, Diem found that he could not depend on a single Vietnamese battalion; he had nothing in the treasury; he could not make contact with about 85% of his villages," the paragraph continued.

"His advisers—including those from the U. S.—cautioned him to go slowly. You are too weak to fight now, they counseled. Invite negotiations; play for time. The advice was accepted. While soldiers and tanks moved through the tense streets of Saigon, the weanling government of the weanling state of South Vietnam dickered and maneuvered to whittle down the warlords and the sects."

Let us examine these recommendations for which U. S. advisors received praise. Put into plain language, what our men were saying was:

With eighty-five per cent of the country against you, you are too weak to fight. Take it easy, stall for time, promise reforms, tell your people anything that will lull them into believing you are going to give them representation; then knock them off one at a time.

Such advice was unnecessary. Diem had used ruses all his life. It was America's advising treachery, and approving of it, that Time readers never considered, i^e van Vien was given the soft-soap treatment and told to forget the past, as though all were forgiven. Diem piously proclaimed, in the same Time report, "Clever maneuvers only betray, demoralize and divide the people." But he did as his American advisors suggested.

No honest, factual article has been published to date on those Americans Time lauded, and of their use of the unlimited bribing power of the American treasury to buy off the lieutenants of leaders who represented a majority of the nation and who could have strangled the Vietminh in their areas had we

permitted them. Time said, "An Asian tradition has it that if one saves a man's life, one is henceforth responsible for his destiny. The U. S., in a sense, is lumping these two missions into one simultaneous undertaking in South Vietnam. In addition to its millions and its prestige, Washington invested the talents of 1,000 Americans in the country, with the ex- Army chief of staff, General J. Lawton Collins, as the top U. S. emissary. Among them, for land reform, Wolf Ladejinsky, the celebrated Agricultural Department expert who did the land reform job in post-war Japan; for maneuvering against the communists, Colonel Edward Lansdale, the officer who played such a helpful role in the rise of Philippines President Ramon Magsaysay that Filipinos gave him a post-election title of 'General Landslide'."

Time negelected to mention that Russian-born Wolf Ladejinsky was booted out of his U. S. agricultural attache job in Tokyo in 1954. He bought stock in a company the success of which was assured by American aid. As for Colonel Lansdale, the indignant snort "Talk sense!" is long overdue. By August 4, 1961, Time had made Lansdale "the Pentagon's guerrilla warfare expert who helped Magsaysay crush the Huks in the Philippines and advised Ngo dinh Diem in his battle against the Binh Xuyen gang." Joe

Alsop, in his "Memo for Otto Passman" (Sept. 24, 1962) called Lansdale one of the unsung heroes of the cold war. What does he mean, "unsung"?

Glowing writers by the score had boasted that Colonel Lansdale elected Magsaysay. What could be more insulting to a free people than to infer that their president would never have been elected without the aid of an American intruder? And certainly Magsaysay was in a bad way if he could not defeat the Huks without Ed Lansdale.

Raymond Cartier wrote in the May 28, 1955, issue of Paris Match that the success of any new tri-party co-operation in South Vietnam would depend on Diem's desire for co-operation. "It demands also," Cartier continued, "the dropping of the anti-French commando unit installed in the American embassy. The men that compose it have been drawn by the ardor of their game into excesses capable of cleaving a breach in Franco-American relations that will pass beyond the framework of Indochina. Here [in Saigon] they have provoked in the [French] expeditionary corps and civilian population a resentment that is all the more significant since it follows the period of harmony that marked the mission of Ambassador Donald Heath."

By "anti-French commando unit installed in the American

embassy," Cartier was referring to Colonel Lansdale and General O'Daniel; and he added, "The American team has set itself the task of building Vietnamese inner solidarity by cultivating nationalism and exciting all the animosities created by a century of unequal coexistence."

On his return to America Lansdale was photographed with Allen Dulles, receiving the Distinguished Service Medal. For what? For doing for Russia in two years what millions of dollars and a decade of propaganda had failed to accomplish: making a hundred thousand bitterly anti-Communist French soldiers anti-American? Jean Larteguy, author of The Centurions, blasted Lansdale in Paris Match as late as September 14, 1963 as "one of those kingmakers of the American secret services." Cambodia credited its anti-American sentiment to Edward Lansdale who, for his services in Asia, was duly made deputy assistant secretary for defense.

Then a new-dealer naval officer named William Lederer and a liberal professor named Eugene Burdick wrote a book called The Ugly American, which got new dealer Lederer advisory jobs with the Peace Corps and

Readers' Digest. Mr. Lederer was asked if, as a naval officer, he was not afraid to write such a book. "Not at all," he replied. "We had clearance from the Pentagon!" And why shouldn't he, since a good portion of the book was dedicated to the praise of Colonel Edward Lansdale, transparently disguised as Colonel Edwin Hillingsdale? In a short time Lansdale was made a brigadier-general, and The Ugly American went through several editions. It was translated into foreign languages, distributed abroad by the U. S. Information Service and displayed in Moscow as part of an American cultural exposition.

Americans should go back and reread The Ugly American, with their minds as well as their eyes. They were told that of all America's officers in the East only one had the courage and initiative to launch and win a one-man campaign to show the Filipinos that Americans are not all rich and snobs. "Hillingsdale" did it. In full uniform as an American colonel and wearing his ribbons, he rode into a Philippine village on a motorcycle bearing a sign saying "The ragtime kid," then played a harmonica in the gutter for a crowd of mouth-breathing loafers from whom he proceeded to bum the price of a meal.

Mr. Lederer insulted America's intelligence. In the face-conscious East, where respect is inextricably associated with dignity, the moment "Colonel Hillingsdale" descended to coolie level he ceased to build up friendship or esteem for America. On the contrary he carried America down with him.

From the Philippines Mr. Lederer's hero went to Southeast Asia, where he memorized files on politicians and even princes, and then astounded them by pretending to read the lines of their hands. All doors were opened to him, and a king asked to meet him. America's "Edwin Hillingsdale" single-handedly could have put over all the pet projects of our inepts who were using Southeast Asia as their playground had he not been thwarted by a jealous ambassador.

Stop and think it over. What Lederer is saying in this book, in which the insult is compounded by our translating it into the dupes' own languages, is that Southeast Asians are a bunch of superstitious oafs whom Ed "Hillingsdale" made fools of and would have continued to play for suckers indefinitely if, to the disapproval of Messrs. Lederer and Burdick, our ambassador had not stopped him.

Such were the actors in Diem's camp and ours as the battle that was South Vietnam's last chance to shake off the unwanted family took shape.

Americans were dependent on picture magazines for news as the clouds gathered. Life magazine's editorial of March 14, 1955, was headed "Dulles in S. E. Asia" and everything was fine. At that moment, if the truth had only been known, Diem's friend, Nguyen phuoc Dang, was flying to Bangkok on a personal mission to Thailand's strong man, Pibul Songgram, to arrange refuge and free passage for Diem's family, if things went wrong. And Nhu had started shipping out cases of money.

"What were you doing at this time?" the writer asked General Le van Vien. "Did you know the clash was coming?"

"We should have, Vien answered. "After Hinh was broken things were quiet for three months, while Diem and Nhu moved their henchmen into commands in the army, down to non-com level."

He continued, "Toward the end of December [1954] General O'Daniel started coming to see me. He begged me for a week to desert the sects and let Diem wipe them out separately. I told him to be patient. A civil war would kill off men who were needed against the Communists. Demilitarize the sects gradually, if you want to, I told him, but don't drive them into a civil war. Red cadres are lying dormant in all the villages, and if you eliminate the sects you will have no one to contain them. Worse, you will drive the remnants of the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai underground, where they will have to accommodate themselves with the Reds to survive.

"If you disband them, overnight, without giving them fair incorporation in the regular army, they will take to the hills and become bandits to make a living. Furthermore, you will alienate their provinces, where the people know that the sects alone stand between them and Ho chi Minh. But you couldn t tell O'Daniel anything," Le van Vien lamented, with a palmsup gesture of the hands.

"He was stubborn, and less intelligent than Diem. I think Diem would have been patient and followed the course I advised if O'Daniel had not pushed him. I had four talks with Diem and more meetings with O'Daniel before the end of 1954. Each time I urged O'Daniel to dissuade Diem from doing anything foolish, that it would only aid the Communists. At the same

time I knew O'Daniel was going to the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai generals, trying to line them up against me.

"Above all, I begged him to restrain Diem from taking the field against Bacut [the Hoa Hao general]. Bacut was in revolt because Diem wanted to disband his forces without making any provision for them. His demands were not unreasonable. He could have been brought back.

"I went up to Dalat to do some hunting in January 1955, and General O'Daniel asked General Ely [Commander of the French troops in Vietnam] to send a plane for me. He wanted to see me. I had had enough of him and did not go. There was no point in trying to talk to a man who would not listen. At the same time I was under pressure from everyone around me to take steps to protect them against Diem. I led the coalition and everyone kept telling me that only it could prevent Diem from suppressing all opposition. At last I went to General Ely to ask his advice and he told me my fears were unfounded. He said he was responsible for preserving order and he would see that there was no civil war. That is how we happened to be caught off-guard."

Yet there was no lack of storm signals. The February 1955 defection of General Trinh minh The and his 2500 personal Cao Dai followers left his spiritual leader, Pope Pham cong Tac, dependent on General Nguyen thanh Phuong and his 25,000 troops. True, Trinh minh The had never been reliable. He was a sadistic butcher when the Cao Dai were fighting the French, but as the first of the coalition generals to be bought out by Diem's American team his defection was an indication of what was ahead. Trinh minh The, according to Raymond Cartier, was paid two million dollars, more money than he had ever hoped for in his wildest dreams.

Even with the bribing of Trinh, which the American press heralded as a "rallying," the scattered opposition leaders could not bring themselves to unite under one man. With the sword hanging over them, they continued to intrigue and undercut each other. Each wanted to be a leader and every man with enough friends to fill a cafe formed a party. By the end of February 1955, thirty-seven opposition political parties were struggling for supremacy among themselves, instead of forming a solid front.

Methodically, cunningly, Diem picked out the strongest of the political parties and proceeded to cut it to pieces first. In the provinces, government

troops swooped down on villages in a series of lightning raids against the Dai Viet party. There were two immediate results from this: The Dai Viet moved closer to Le van Vien's United Nationalist Front for protection. While on the visa U. S. Ambassador Donald Heath had given him, Dr. Nguyen ton Hoan, the leader of the Dai Viet, traveled to Washington to tell his story.

Hoan left his wife and children in Saigon and took off, naively believing that all he had to do was explain the situation and our officials would rectify their mistakes.

A strange, honest, hard-working idealist, was this Nguyen ton Hoan. He was a Catholic, though bom in Tay Ninh, the seat of the Cao Dai sect, on May 1, 1917. The Japanese arrested him for a time in 1943. The following year they were after him again and he took shelter in the brush, in Cambodia. In 1946 came the attempted coup d'etat against Ho chi Minh mentioned in a previous chapter, and Hoan's flight to China. Back in Saigon in 1949 he founded the antiCommunist league known as the "Quoc Gia Lien Hiep" and as minister of youth affairs from 1949 to 1951 he organized what he called disintoxication centers, to reeducate Communist youth.

Hoan had been told that Jeff Parsons was the architect of America's policy in Southeast Asia, but that Kenneth Todd Young, in the State Department, was the man to see—all of which was true as far as it went. What Hoan did not know was that Young's job was to open doors for pro-Diem emissaries and see that Vietnamese who arrived with disturbing reports on our man were given a runaround. Hoan was sent to Joseph Buttinger, the Austrian socialist who was in New York, and from Buttinger to Milton Sachs, of Brandeis University; in sum, from one Diem propagandist to another, until, fed up with getting nowhere, he packed up and went to

France. Later, as the fight to shield senators and congressmen from the truth became more desperate, no member of the Diem opposition could get a visa to America, and inability to obtain a visa was then presented as indisputable proof of the man's unimportance.

All Hoan got out of Kenneth foung was an admission that Buu Hoi, a cousin of Bao Dai who had dropped his title of "prince," was being pushed as a possible Diem successor. And in fact Buu Hoi undoubtedly had an

inside track in his close relationship with American authoress Miss Ellen Hammer, whose anti-Diem writings on South Vietnam never failed to plug the man whose rise to power might make Miss Hammer South Vietnam's first lady. {The Struggle for Indochina Continues and Geneva to Bandoeng are among her books. She was published by Princeton Press and The Pacific Spectator of Stanford University.) it might be added also that Buu Hoi was Mendes-France's man.

From those in Washington who were advancing socialism or trying to acquire personal power by dabbling in foreign intrigue, the best Hoan got was assurance that if he could raise fifty thousand dollars they would get him some publicity. Even then he never completely realized the number of wheels within wheels at work in America to keep our policy on the beam from which he, one friendless Vietnamese, was trying to sway it.

While his followers back in Saigon were being stripped of their finances, arrested or hounded into flight or clandestineness, Hoan rode back and forth on buses from one American "Southeast Asia authority" to another. Every word he said was passed on to the Vietnamese embassy in Washington, CIA, USIA and the American aid administration, for transmission back to Diem and Nhu. When he had finished, Hoan dared not return to Saigon. France was the only country open to him, so to Paris he went. Thereafter anything he said was discredited by Diem propagandists in the United States as griping from a puppet of the embittered colonialists. His wife and children were retained in Saigon as hostages.

Thus civilian opposition to Diem in the purely political sense was led to dissipate itself, in puerile splinterings at home while in America it beat its head against a news blackout and the stone wall of officialdom. In the end, salvation, if it were to come, could come only from the three armed bands, one of which had already partially defected. The remaining leaders went through the proper motions and made the usual speeches

of solidarity. On March 3, 1955, the same United National Front that American money had shattered the previous September was re-formed. But this time to everyone's surprise the native socialist party joined the lineup. The most respected socialist in South Vietnam was Ho huu Tuong, a novelist, lexicographer and political leader who had fought the French for twenty-five years. Before Tuong clashed with the Ngo dinhs he was

referred to in America as a great nationalist, which he never was. Tuong was an internationalist, and an important array of Americans were behind him. But to give him his just due it must be admitted that he was an enemy of the Vietminh on grounds that they were Stalinist.

A photographer took a picture of the new alliance: Pope Pham cong Tac in the center, old General Tran van Sioai of the fierce calvary moustache at his right, Le van Vien at his left. For over two weeks internal wrangling went on among them, with no one knows what deals to ensure each leader's jealously guarded prerogatives. Then on March 21, 1955, the ultimatum that Time resented was served.

A week passed, a week in which each side watched the other like two wary wrestlers, with General Ely assuring Le van Vien there would be no fighting and Diem's intermediaries dangling bribes of two and three million dollars, as though it were ice cream soda money, before the generals protecting Le van Vien's flanks. While the bickering continued, Diem's tanks and troops moved into position.

Two other groups joined the United Front: the Vietnam Quoc Dan Dung, outcome of a party formed by the Chinese Nationalists in the Red River valley after V-J Day, and a group from Central Vietnam calling itself the Movement for the Protection of Popular Security. One needed no Gallup poll to see at a glance that a majority of the country wanted nothing to do with America's man and were out to oust him.

By that time the ultimatum that Diem dissolve his cabinet was a dead issue. Fourteen of the ministers threatened had already resigned. Only the guardian of the seal remained on the job, and he from a sense of duty. An imperative wire from Bao Dai summoned Diem to appear before him in Cannes, on May 9, pending which General Nguyen van Vy, who had gone to Dalat for safety after the Hinh affair, was named commander of the army. All that remained to Diem was the radio station, the censor's office and his two Americans, General O'Daniel and Colonel Lansdale, the lot supported by four battalions of personal troops which Diem had brought down from the Nha-Trang region.

THE BELEAGUERED MAN

Then the storm broke. At midnight on Thursday, March 28, Diem's 81 m. m. mortars started belching fire. Diem directed his end of the battle from within the Independence Palace. Le van Vien's home and command post

were in a villa at the exit of the Y bridge, which crossed the stagnant arroyo separating Saigon from the Chinese city. But overnight Vien's position had become precarious, if not hopeless. General Phuong, in return for $3.6 million, plus monthly payments for his troops and a sinecure command for himself (as John Osborne was to admit in Life of May 13, 1957), had gone over to Diem with his 25,000 followers, bag and baggage. His spiritual leader, the Cao Dai pope, was already weakened by the bribing of Trinh minh The, and Phuong's sellout left him high and dry.

Tran van Sioai, the Hoa Hao general, was offered a million dollars for himself and another million for his troops, but his brief period as an "excellency" after he betrayed General Hinh had taught him his lesson. Ferocious old Sioai refused to see Diem's advisors again. Later he told General Hinh's father that an agreement could have been reached if any kind of an honorable proposition had been made. The account he gave of events leading up to the fighting was as follows: "General O'Daniel came to me and demanded angrily, 'I hear you are against Diem.' I said no, we Hoa Hao are not against Diem but he is making demands that we cannot accept. 'Then you are against him,' he shouted. I said no, we are not exactly against him, but we cannot accept all his conditions. 'Then you are against him,' repeated General O'Daniel, 'and if you don't support him you won't be able to live; we will cut off all your American aid.'

" 'That won't make any difference to us Hoa Hao,' I told him, 'because Diem has never let us have any of it.' General O'Daniel was angry and said, 'If you don't support Diem we]ll smash your faces.* " (The words used by Nguyen van Tam in describing O'Daniel's threat were "On va casser la figure") Tran van Sioai said, "All right, then, if that is the way it is going to be," or words to that effect. "General O'Daniel sent for me three times after that," he added, "but I never saw him again. If I had enjoyed seeing him I would have gone, but he blustered and shouted too much, and I didn't like it."

Bacut, the wild Hoa Hao consumptive with hair hanging to his shoulders, stuck with Sioai and Le van Vien; but Bacut and Sioai were not in on the fighting that night of April 28, 1955. The object of Diem's surprise attack was to destroy his enemies piecemeal. Until 4:00 a. m. the heavy mortars rocked

Saigon and staccato bursts of machine gun fire could be heard from the terraces on Boulevard Gallieni. When the lull came 26 dead and 152 wounded were amid the debris of the shattered streets, but Diem's battalions with their superior fire power and American backing held the city.

CHAPTER TEN
THE BATTLE OF SAIGON

All evidence suggests that Diem and his American advisors waited until the occasion was ripe, then exploited the element of surprise. The Binh Xuyen, however, were blamed for opening hostilities. Certainly no judge sifting the facts would take this claim seriously, for as long as things were going well and victory seemed to justify the means, Diem's Americans themselves bragged of their complicity in urging Diem to open hostilities.

Congressman Walter H. Judd of Minnesota wrote approvingly in a booklet put out by Diem's American lobby in September 1956 called "A Symposium on America's Stake in South Vietnam," that while General Ely and General Collins were home, wringing their hands over the impending demise of the country, fortunately Diem went in and cleaned things up. "Since they were gone they could not stop him," Congressman Judd observed, adding, "General O'Daniel egged Diem on, as I understand, all the way." General O'Daniel must have approved of this statement, since he was chairman of the organization that printed the booklet.

General Ely was still in Saigon as high commissioner of the French Republic on March 28, 1955. His phone rang. On the other end of the line he heard Diem's voice in a high pitch of emotion. A shell had fallen; one man had been killed and several others wounded. The government, Diem announced, was about to order the national army into action against the Binh Xuyen. Ely begged for patience, pleaded with Diem not to throw the country into a civil war and promised that an investigation would be opened immediately. There was no answer. Diem had hung up.

General Lawton Collins, as Congressman Judd said, was in Washington, and every man in Ngo dinh Diem's entourage was convinced that the trip was to advise Foster Dulles to dump Diem and all his camp, and do it quickly. Whether true or not, everything that transpired in the next three weeks could be called a comedy of errors had the results not been so tragic.

Never was there a better example of the truth of Axel Oxensteim s reflection that his son would be surprised to learn with what little intelligence countries are governed.

Let us turn from the battle raging in Saigon, which was renewed shortly after dawn on Friday morning, April 29, 1955. Diem and the circle of friends whose heads would fall if his did sized up the situation coldly and realistically. Back and forth between Independence Palace and the American embassy, where Mr. Randolph Kidder had taken over as charge d'affaires, went the trusted go-betweens.

The political picture seen from Saigon looked grim. Tran van Chuong in the Vietnamese embassy in Washington had ceased to answer telegrams. If Chuong were taking his distance it could only mean that, from where he was sitting, Diem looked about to fall. Somehow the ground had to be cut from beneath Lawton Collins' feet

The post of ambassad r-at-large for Europe was unnecessary, since its office at 47 bi& Avenue Kleber in Paris duplicated, when it was not pulling against, the ambassador to France. However, it will be recalled that it was created for Diem s youngest brother, Luyen. Luyen was in Saigon for a family council when the tension began to mount. So while General Collins winged his way toward Washington, Luyen was sent racing to Cannes to try to wheedle a new statement of confidence out of Bm Dai before Collins and Bao Dai's dismissal of Diem could reach the State Department together.

The gates to Chateau Thorenc were closed. Bao Dai refused to see him. Luyen then took off for Psiris. Throughout Wednesday, April 20, he scurried back and forth between talks with the French socialists, his French advisor and the American embassy. On Wednesday night he decided on a move that was to become classic. He would send a deputy to Washington The "deputy ambassador" would slip into town, contact Diem's supporters in the State Department and the senators regarded as in Diem's pocket. When he had obtained a promise that they would stick with their man, and if possible a promise that General Lawton Collins would be recalled, then the deputy ambassador would descend on the Vietnamese embassy and bulldoze Tran van Chuong back into line.

Luyen looked around his office. The only employee he trusted sufficiently to dub "deputy ambassador," even for a week, was a chunky, square-faced artist named Vo Lang, in his late thirties, whose brother, Vo

Hai, was close to Diem. Vo Lang spoke no English and his judgment was open to question, but his integrity was never in doubt. He readily

admitted that his own cousin, Vu van Thai, Diem's minister of public works, was a Communist and in his opinion ought to be not thrown out but shot.

On Thursday, April 21, Vo Lang presented himself at the visa office of the American embassy on Avenue Gabriel. Trouble. Miss Dorothy Barker was polite but firm. Vo had no diplomatic passport so, officially, he was no diplomat. And she could not issue a visa at once, even a transient one, to an unknown Vietnamese. A day was lost while Luyen pulled strings through William Gibson in the American embassy. For, suppose Luyen had requested a diplomatic visa for Vo, which only Pham duy Khiem, the ambassador and high commissioner to France, could issue? Khiem would wire Madame Chuong in Saigon; Madame Chuong would wire her husband in Washington, and Vo Lang would be undercut instead of Chuong.

On Friday, April 22, all obstacles miraculously rolled away. Vo got his visa. He was informed that Monsieur Paul Devinat would fly from Tokyo and meet him in Washington at the French Embassy with further instructions and advice. There was a last meeting with a socialist councilor of the French Union at a comer table in La Coupole in Montparnasse. More advice and instructions. Then, with the mysteriousness and secretiveness characteristic of his race, Vo slipped off without a word to the "aide" who was being sent along to translate and if necessary say what Vo was supposed to say. This author, incidentally, was the aide, and the conversations related were conversations in which the author served as interpreter.

Vo's disappearance, it developed later, was to meet a blackmarket exchange dealer who sold him a thousand-dollar banknote and two five hundred dollar bills, so he would have some American money to give the taxi driver when he reached New York. At 11:30 that night Vo and his aide took off from Orly.

The interesting part of these preparatory shenanigans is that at that moment, as the Time article of April 4 discloses, the bitter anti-French campaign being run by the American press and the Diem government was at its height. All of Diem's troubles were laid to "the wily, rear-guard

maneuvers of colonialism," meaning France. Yet, French socialists were backing Diem, advising his "deputy ambassador," and flying a man to Washington to help save Diem. Obviously the loyalty of France's socialists was to a Vietnamese francophobe half-way around the world—never to their country. This is part of the phenomena of the modern international left.

Vo Lang's first preoccupation on reaching New York on

Saturday noon, April 23, 1955, was to telephone Dr. Wesley Fishel, of Michigan State University, in Lansing, Michigan, which introduced a new actor in the plot. Nothing had been said about Dr. Fishel in Paris. It was not the first example, nor was it to be the last, of the genius of the participants in this web of intrigue for not letting the left hand know what the right hand was doing.

On Sunday, April 24, Vo's plane for Washington departed while he was in an airport shop, adding a telescopic lens for his camera to his expense account. At last, late that afternoon, he was to arrive at Washington's Dupont Plaza Hotel.

How does an inexperienced young man, picked at random, sent to a country where he has never been before and where he does not speak the language, go about saving a government? For the honest senators and private citizens who would like to know the answer to this question and will never obtain it through any congressional investigation their government is likely to hold, it was really very simple. But first bear in mind that, for all his frankness later, Vo Lang never divulged the details of why he was instructed to call REgent 7-5600, extension 5287, in Washington, and ask for K.Y., as soon as senatorial support for Diem was assured "for just a little longer." Or of his half-hour conversation over the telephone with Wesley Fishel. All we know is that on Monday morning, April 25, instructions called for his seeing first Senator Mike Mansfield and then Senator Hubert Humphrey. After talking with them, he was to give a bipartisan appearance to the drive for Diem support by calling on Senator Mundt of South Dakota and Senator Knowland of California.

Vo had no trouble with Mansfield. He was in Diem's corner. And to Vo Lang's credit be it admitted that, on a mission for Luyen though he was, Vo told the senator that Diem must be made to broaden the base of his government, that southern demands for a voice in their affairs must be

given a hearing. Mike Mansfield, the liberal history professor from Montana, elected by the mine workers' union and his state's unionized farmers, shifted Vo over to Frank Velio, secretary of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee. Through Velio what Vo Lang had to say would be passed on to the committee. Velio, in pidgin French, conducted his own interrogation. And every question he posed was loaded, its aim all but concealed in a rambling "You think we ought to do this, don't you?" preamble which, if Vo understood at all, oriental politeness demanded that he answer in the affirmative.

Had an intelligent freshman in political science been sitting

in the office of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that April afternoon while America's prestige and Southeast Asia's future were at stake, he would have been appalled to see how the secretary-interpreter on whom our law-makers depended operated. How many fact-finding missions to South Vietnam saw situations through the warped vision of Velio's interpreting and came home to approve policies described thereafter as American? America's they never were. They were the policies of men who knew where they were going, and who, by their monopoly on key positions, were able to impose their interpreter on senators who might otherwise prove troublesome.

Vo Lang was never expected to change their minds. He was the "deputy ambassador" sent to provide statements justifying what they already intended to do. Vo was to say yes when yes was the answer his interrogator wanted. Each sentence to which he gave approval, impressed by marble surroundings and his obligation as a favor-demanding guest, was accredited in its entirety to him, with recommendations that his observations be accepted.

Whatever happened later, Velio cannot say that Vo Lang did not warn him. Again, as in Mansfield's office, Vo pleaded that America stay behind Diem "just a little longer," but that after the crisis he be made to widen the base of his government. "How can we make him?" Velio asked. "Make him!" replied Vo, and he leaned back in his chair.

How would one sum up those senators with whom Vo Lang talked that Monday of April 25, 1955, while the crisis mounted in Saigon and the entire American press unleashed itself in a blind torrent of rage against Bao Dai,

the Binh Xuyen, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects and last but not least the French? Mansfield was the most dangerous, for each gesture, each observation he made with with an air of false kindliness that beguiled the listener into believing that this was a friend of humanity. Actually, behind the benign front lay the professional "progressive," applying to each decision a single yardstick: is this the liberal thing to do?—and feeling that no action which brought about the liberal solution was too brutal. The bloodshed, if there is bloodshed, be on "their" hands (the enemies of liberalism), for if they had not resisted, bloodshed could have been avoided, seemed to be Mike Mansfield's reasoning.

Hubert Humphrey must be regarded as a demagogue with a mind second to none by those who compare his private conversations with his public pronouncements. His conversation

with Vo Lang was short. Every question he asked was intelligent, direct to the core of the problem. The man was concentrating, not shooting off hot air. Once he had satisfied himself on a point and mentally filed it away he went on to the next point. One could see him putting the pieces together m his mind. When Vo Lang launched into his diatribe against the French, Humphrey silenced him with a gesture. "You have your independence now; quit fighting the French. That is over."

The only conclusion one can reach is that Humphrey is intelligent, that every sacrifice of America's interests is made knowingly, to court the mob, to stay in office. Whether he weighs the sacrifices and feels that America can stand the setback as a price she must pay for Hubert Humphrey, or whether he is acting with the long-range eye of a socialist out to make collapse of the existing system inevitable, is something American voters and historians must decide for themselves. Humphrey pledged his support to Diem. For nine years it was always "just a little longer."

Senator Karl Mundt, the Republican from South Dakota, moved slowly, thought slowly, but left no doubt that he was doing what he thought would be honorable and best. He listened to Vo Lang's request, then reached for his telephone to call Nixon's office, that Vo might put his message before the vice-president. Nixon was out, but never mind, Mundt would throw his support behind Mansfield and Humphrey on matters pertaining to Ngo dinh Diem. It was the story of our role in Southeast Asia in a nutshell. The liberal

establishment could not lose, for in “honest” Diem, the anti-colonialist who had studied to be a priest, and in his brother who had been a labor leader, American progressives had a team behind which all the shades of the political spectrum could be herded under threat of being called un-American if they balked.

In a state of elation Vo Lang left Senator Mundt’s office and headed for Senator Knowland’s. Knowland was an important figure on the Foreign Relations Committee. Enlisting his support would tip the scale; and Knowland joined the bi-partisan front for Diem wholeheartedly. From that moment Vo Lang felt that he alone had saved the Ngo dinh Diem regime, little realizing that he had only provided the quotes.

It was a strange interview that Vo Lang had with Knowland. Of all the senators in that marble-floored building Knowland portrayed best in his person the Roman idea of the lawmaker. He was impressive; he looked intelligent and forceful, but he did not ask a question on the background of the crisis, the

prospects for the future, how the people really felt in South Vietnam. Instead, he told Vo Lang.

The socialist councillor of the French Union, in his last briefing at the Montparnasse cafe before Vo Lang boarded the plane for America, had said, “Tell the senators [in Washington] not to worry about Le van Vien. All he wants is money. We can buy him off.” Vo dutifully passed the observation on to Knowland, who replied, quite admirably, “The United States will never pay ransom to a river pirate!” In retrospect a disturbing thought remains: Surely the councillor of the French Union knew when he made his statement that Vien was the terror of the Communists, and was incorruptible. The logical explanation then is that this was a final ruse to clinch Knowland’s support by making him adamant against Diem’s enemy, Vien, to whose former allies millions had already been paid in bribes.

From the Senate Office Building Vo took a taxi to the embassy of the nation being axed by both the Vietnamese press and the American as villain of the piece, to meet Monsieur Paul Devinat, the official who had flown all the way from Tokyo to help put his mission across. It was a day of triumph for Vo—triumph political and social, beyond anything he had dreamed of during those lonely months in Hong Kong when, as an exile, he made a

living drawing pictures of Chinese in the street. From the French embassy he doubled back to the home of a woman prominent in Republican circles, on Jefferson Place, for a cocktail. Here he made the acquaintance of Joseph Ballentine, a retired foreign service official who had spent years in the Orient. Ballentine's understanding of the East, his judgment and personal acquaintance with leaders in South China, impressed Vo. Here was a man to whom, in a pinch, one could refer a senator with complete confidence in the authority's integrity.

For the moment everything ran according to plan. Tran van Chuong, still ignoring Diem's telegrams in his embassy, was apparently still unaware that he was about to be whipped into line. The last thing Vo did before going to bed the night of his first day in Washington was call Wesley Fishel of Michigan State University for further orders.

The next day, Tuesday the 26th, was hectic. The headlines were bigger, the cartoons denigrating Bao Dai wilder. U. S. News & World Report sent a man to interview Vo in the Dupont Plaza. There was a long meeting in the Cambodian embassy, the only development of which was a request by Vo Lang that his aide call a number in Alexandria, hang up if

a man answered, but if it was a woman's voice say, "This is a friend of Jacques in the Cambodian embassy. Can you come to the Dupont Plaza at once?"

At five-thirty that afternoon Vo had an appointment with Kenneth Young in the State Department, to which he went alone. What transpired between then and midnight, when Vo returned to his hotel, is not known. Vo called Wesley Fishel again as soon as he got to his room, then an airline to make a reservation for a quick round trip to Michigan, departing in the morning. Not until 1961, when Vo's hair had turned white and he was again shabbily dressed, painting pictures for a living in the apartment he had bought near the Folies Begere in his brief period of access to the American aid till, did he divulge any part of the long conversation he had with the behind-the-scenes Southeast Asia ace of the State Department, Kenneth Todd Young.

Vo confided, "He told me that they had been intercepting Chuong's messages to Bao Dai for months and they were fed up with him. If I wanted to cooperate, Young said they would make me ambassador to Washington."

“Do you think they were able to decipher the code Chuong used with Bao Dai, or was someone in Bao Dai’s household leaking the message to Bill Gibson in Paris?”

“I don’t know,” the disillusioned Vo Lang replied.

The day after Vo’s late return from Lansing, Michigan, political science professor Wesley Fishel himself arrived in Washington to take a hand. Short, swarthy, well built and with the cat-like tread of a boxer, Fishel had all the worst characteristics of the genus liberal currently gripping American education. Where he came from, who he was, no one seemed to know. Under his direction a Vietnam Project had been instituted in Michigan State, and it was evident from Fishel’s steamroller tactics that any student not in agreement with Michigan State’s indoctrination on behalf of Ngo dinh Diem would cause no serious trouble to the crusade, the reason being that he would not get a diploma, without which ratification of knowledge no job of any importance would be open to him.

New Leader magazine of December 7, 1959, carried a biographical sketch on Fishel, accompanying an article in which Communist subversion is pictured as fighting for its life in South Vietnam before the advances made by land reform (run by Fishel’s friend, Wolf Ladejinsky), political education (police state fashion), rural credit (restricted to Diem’s particular friends) and community development. (“Social pressure was usually sufficient to ensure the presence of the able-bodied

citizens," wrote apologist Fishel of the forced labor aspect of the community development.)

The biography given was as follows: “Wesley R. Fishel, [birthplace and source of his education unstated] has traveled, studied and taught extensively in the Far East for the past 20 years.” That would put Mr. Fishel in the Far East around 1939. It would be interesting to know where he traveled and studied at that time, how he happened to go to the Far East, who sent him.

“In 1953 he directed a classified research project in Korea and Japan for the Operations Research Office of Johns Hopkins University [Milton Eisenhower’s university].” Not reassuring. How does it happen that no conservative is ever selected for such jobs?

“The following year,” New Leader continued, “he served in Indochina as consultant in governmental reorganization for the U. S. Operations Mission and as staff member for General J. Lawton Collins, special

Presidential representative." Interesting, this. The year 1954 was the period when American leftists swarming over Indochina as operations missions agents and in other capacities, worked to sabotage Washington's aid to the French, then fighting Ho chi Minh. The Michigan State professor's loyalty to his chief, General Lawton Collins, on whose staff he was, could not have been great, since one year later Mr. Fishel was in Washington to help Vo Lang get General Collins fired from his job.

But now we are getting somewhere: "In 1956-58 he headed a Michigan State advisory group on public administration in Vietnam," says the vague biography. Among other things, Michigan State was at that time training the South Vietnamese police that ran Hitler's Gestapo a close second, all this as part of public administration.

New Leader terminated the only Fishel biography we have at hand with the statement that "He is the author of The End of Extra-Territoriality in China and of many scholarly articles. Readers will recall his article "Vietnam's Democratic One-Man Rule" which ran in our November 2 [1959] issue."

A treatise on the psychology of wishful thinking among American conservatives could be derived from the reaction of the American public during the up period and down period of our Diem intoxication. When the American left, of which New Leader and Wesley Fishel are examples, turned against Diem in 1961 to get out from under their responsibility for him, America's solid middle-of-the-roaders rose in arms in Diem's defense. They knew nothing of the reasons for the left's

disavowal. They never reasoned that our militant left, having accumulated an explosive force, might be putting itself on record as being against it before it blew up. The fact that the New York Times began cooling off toward Diem was sufficient to make conservative citizens feel that he must be good. When the same leftist journals and professors were on positive rather than a negative line, our tranquillity-seeking public swallowed it without a murmur, though the soft soap was transparently false. Then they were happy to leave South Vietnam to the New Leader and men like Wesley Fishel.

Fishel's arrival in Washington that hot April 28, coinciding as it did with Diem's decision to launch hostilities in Saigon, added further

complications. Vo and his aide-interpreter appeared together on visits to congressmen, but said aide knew nothing of what went on in the side trips Vo made with Professor Fishel or the six-hour talks when Vo was presumably with Kenneth Young. In fact, from the moment of Fishel's arrival, a promise of support having been extracted from the four important senators on the Foreign Relations Committee, the aide's duties consisted mainly of accompanying Vo Lang to Corr's Hobby Shop for the purpose of buying a fourhundred-dollar model airplane with a six-foot wing spread and a gasoline motor, or to cocktail parties or on searches for more photographic equipment, for which the American taxpayer, without a say in the matter, was Santa Claus.

An appointment was set up for a courtesy call on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, April 29, the idea being that Vo should meet as many of the senators on the Foreign Relations Committee as possible, so that he would know them in the event of another mission. At 9:45 a phone call came for Vo in his room. "I have to go down to the lobby to see Mr. Fishel," he explained. "I'll be right back." Literally, he was kidnapped, simply put in a car and taken away. He returned that afternoon at 4:30, with no explanation as to where he had been or why he had walked out on the McCarthy appointment without the courtesy of making a cancellation or an apology. One possible explanation is that certain Americans pulling strings in Vietnamese affairs did not want a naive and sometimes too honest Vo Lang wandering into Joe McCarthy's office and waxing loquacious.

That night a speech by Congressmen William Jennings Bryan Dorn of South Carolina went over the air, demanding the recall of Ambassador J. Lawton Collins. An hour later Vo Lang descended on the Vietnamese embassy for the battle that was to last till midnight. He was in a state of high elation

when he returned to the Dupont Plaza shortly after twelvethirty, and Ambassador Chuong was once more pro-Diem. Vo Lang's political future seemed assured. Before going to bed he dispatched a telegram to Saigon in code, naming the congressmen whose support he had obtained. Four copies of statements those congressmen had made, eulogizing Diem before Vo had ever seen them, were clipped from the Washington Post and telegraphed to

the four top figures in Saigon, verbatim and at full rate, signed by Vo Lang's hapless "aide." The telegraph bill was slightly over four hundred dollars.

When those telegrams arrived an immense cloud of black smoke covered the sky to the east of Saigon. On April 29 the battle recommenced, shortly after dawn. By nightfall the north branch of the Y bridge had been blown up and the fight had moved beyond the river, into Cholon, where it was raging around Le van Vien's great gambling center, Le Grande Monde. Thousands of huts had gone up in smoke, part of Saigon was a shambles, but the test of strength which the opinionated mandarin in Independence Palace had wanted, and precipitated, was won—at least as far as the city was concerned.

Outside Saigon it was another matter. Le van Vien, aided by the Hoa Hao, still held the rice fields and the waterways leading into the city. Trucks bearing loudspeakers roamed the streets, blaming all the misery on the French and the Binh Xuyen, despite the fact that French General Jacquot's mobile detachments were blocking off as much of Saigon as they could to save it from the fighting and provide a haven for thousands of homeless refugees pouring in from the devastated parts of Saigon and Cholon.

The family in Independence Palace was determined to inflame the population. It was the most fearful incitement to mob violence and anti-colonialist rabble rousing the city had seen. Mimeographed tracts appeared, giving official sanction, as it were, to an anti-French riot. Raymond Cartier reported in Paris Match of May 14,1955, "No Frenchman in Indochina doubts that these tracts exciting the civilian population to massacre them were drawn up in the office of Colonel Lansdale, and the anglicisms they contain, such as spit in la face of the French rather than cracker d. la figure [which anyone familiar with the French language would have used] do not contradict that conviction."

The theme behind the violent anti-French campaign, covered in full by American correspondents on the spot, was that France was backing and inflaming the sects for the dual pur

pose of obstructing formation of a strong government and installing a French grip on the country in spite of the independence which she had recognized. "It was a policy which we might have been tempted to play, which we did not," said Cartier. "If the Diem campaign had succeeded and a strong popularly supported government had resulted it would have had the cynical justification of success. But it did not, as the resultant state of South

Vietnam was to attest. All that resulted was the cruelty, the injustice and the distrust of France, and grim forebodings of what might be expected under similar circumstances in the future."

Of General O'Daniel and the colonel who, having "elected Magsaysay in the Philippines," was about to win new kingmaking laurels in Vietnam, Cartier observed, "Without taking into account past history or present problems, America, in Indochina, dreamed only of ousting the French with a brusque shove of the shoulder, to pursue a path that could but lead to a labyrinth. The blood poured out, the sacrifices borne, the civilization sown in Indochina meant nothing before the brutal and summary men who, beneath their masks of officialdom, displayed the profiles of adventurers."

Here was the start of the rancour which America's later support of the Algerian rebellion was to increase and harden. If the splitting of NATO, the driving of a wedge between America and the armed forces of the country that provides NATO's base, was the intention of those sowing FrancoAmerican animosity in Indochina, their plan succeeded.

To say that confusion reigned in Independence Palace as the last days of April approached would be putting it mildly. A message had come from Bao Dai, as we stated, ordering Diem to present himself in Cannes on May 9. A parallel order from Bao Dai named General Nguyen van Vy commander-in-chief of the army, and since the country had no elected assembly or sovereignty other than Bao Dai, the orders were legal. To dispute their legality would, in fact, put in question the legality of Diem's own appointment as premier.

But dispute them Diem did. Whether he was "egged on" by General O'Daniel, as Congressman Judd put it, or whether he acted on his own, in the fanatical conviction that his appointment came from God and not from Bao Dai, we shall never know. The consequences were the same. His harangues followed the line of all revolutionaries: He orated on the suffering of the people and worked himself into rages over conditions which he himself had created. Every opposition paper had been suppressed, and French publications were barred from

the country, but Diem talked about the new liberties which had accrued with independence.

Over a thousand known anti-Communists had disappeared into the night between the police officers of Diem and Nhu. There were no trials.

Executions had taken place, but no one knew for certain who was in prison or who had been executed, and intimidation, the threat of disappearing, silenced all questioners. The Americans who knew of these events could not have cared less.

General Nguyen van Vy was up in Dalat when promotion to command of the national army descended on him. It was safer there. Nevertheless, he boarded a plane for Saigon, where he arrived late in the afternoon of April 29. About the time news reached Independence Palace that Nguyen van Vy was on his way it became known that General Hinh was also flying home on a mission for Bao Dai.

General Vy moved into General Hinh's villa on the outskirts of town, while Trinh minh The, the ambitious Cao Dai general whom Diem had purchased along with his 2,500 personal troops for some two million dollars (of Amercan aid money!) the previous February, prepared to resist Vy's appointment. Rumors and counter-rumors crossed the capital like wildfire, and in the end no one knew who was in command. Ambassador Chuong in Washington was still not answering telegrams, from Diem at least; the results of Vo Lang's secondary intrigues in Washington under the wing of Professor Fishel had not yet reached Saigon. Matters stood in this uncertain state when April 30 broke over a sweltering capital and its two million inhabitants, securely in Diem's hands but with his power extending no farther.

For ten years this writer has tried to fix the exact role of American initiative and money in the tangled developments of the next forty-eight hours. At this date it is unlikely that the true story will ever be unravelled, so many of the actors are now where they cannot talk. Only those Vietnamese who remained loyal to Diem to the end in order to retain their place on the "gravy train" are still alive; and they are singularly reserved on the subject of those events.

General Vy set off to brave the lion in his den, accompanied by General Ty, then in name at least his chief of staff. The two generals got in a jeep that Saturday morning and with a motorcycle escort preceding them roared through the streets of Saigon where 2,500 more northern refugees unloaded from the American ship Daniel Webster had just joined the horde of

humanity—men, women and children—and jumbled belongings already littering the city.

At Independence Palace they ascended the marble stairway leading to Diem's office. Before they had time to state their business they found themselves facing Trinh minh The and a circle of pistols. Ty had one of his epaulettes tom off and might have suffered worse if at that moment Diem had not appeared to tell them they were under arrest. With The's trigger-happy lieutenants brandishing guns under their noses, Vy and Ty heard Diem order them to sign a paper, swearing loyalty to him and repudiation of Bao Dai.

Let us leave the two generals where they are for a minute. Diem had already started throwing together what he called a National Revolutionary Committee. The members were appointed by the "General Assembly of Revolutionary Forces of the Nation," a puppet assembly which Diem and Nhu had named and then summoned to a meeting in the city hall that Saturday afternoon. Thirty-three names were signed to the manifesto that resulted. These thirty-three men claimed to represent sixteen parties. In all, about two hundred Diem henchmen attended the meeting, the purpose of which was not long in doubt. A large portrait of Bao Dai hung on the wall. It was torn down and trampled on, and Ngo dinh Diem was charged with the formation of a Provisional Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

Lieutenants were dispatched in all directions to mobilize students, tear down Bao Dai's portraits, burn him in effigy, and by their exuberance impress the American embassy and the American press with the strength of the National Revolutionary Committee. It is interesting to look back on this farce and wonder why it was taken seriously, but taken seriously and passed on to the American public as an advance of "democracy," it was. Nguyen bao Toan, the fiery orator whose speech whipped the assembly into tearing down Bao Dai's portrait, was made chairman of the representative committee. A man named Ho han Son, who formerly commanded Ho chi Minh's dreaded Seventh zone, was vice chairman. Nhi Lang, whose picture may be found in Life magazine of April 18, 1955, was No. 3 of the group, in recognition of his services in holding a gun over Nguyen van Vy that morning. Supporting them with the considerable weight and experience at his command was the famous Dr. Tran, who not long before had been president of the administrative committee of the Nam Bo, Ho chi Minh's government in the South.

Had any of these men possessed the power of clairvoyance.

had there been a brief lifting of the shutter, here is what they would have seen: Less than a year later Nguyen bao Toan was to find himself in flight. Fortunately he had a considerable fortune by that time, provided indirectly by the American taxpayer, and when last heard of he was living comfortably in America. Ho han Son was to disappear in January 1956. Nhu and his police made no attempt to look for him. Thirteen months later Son's skeleton was found. Nhi Lang was soon to flee to Cambodia. The others were for the most part broken one by one; or if alive, are now not talking.

Randolph Kidder, then serving as America's charge d' affaires and running the embassy during General Lawton Collins' absence, is also unlikely to divulge any pertinent information. Reports to the French government accused him of encouraging rather than trying to restrain the efforts of General O'Daniel, Colonel Lansdale and the increasingly powerful United States Information Service helping to inflame the civilian population against the French. This did not prevent the State Department from assigning the handsome Mr. Kidder to the Paris embassy in 1959.

On the fateful Saturday of April 30, 1955, another development occurred to pose potentially embarrassing questions at our Saigon embassy. A French plane bearing navigation certificate S. O. A. D. N., Type M. no. 3,681, and owned by the French high commissioner to Vietnam, the very official accused of helping Diem's enemies, made three passes over Le van Vien's command post. It appeared to be photographing the nationalist front's positions and directing the mortar fire that was becoming increasingly accurate. On its fourth pass it dropped a fire bomb and peeled off toward the earth within range of light weapons.

The body of an American named Dixie Reece was found m the wreckage of the plane. Newspaper reports said he was a press photographer, killed while reporting the battle. Papers on his person identified him as head of the photo-laboratory of the American embassy. A Vietnamese Catholic priest named Father Cua was sent on the dangerous mission of trying to locate Mr. Reece before it was known that both Reece and the pilot were dead. Five years later, after Diem had sent Father Cua to prison on a trumped-up charge of receiving stolen goods (following the priest's indiscreet political pronouncements), the American embassy in Paris refused him a visa on grounds that he was an ex-convict.

But let us leave our embassy and the problems of Mr. Kid

der, who was destined to play a greater role in our experiment in Vietnam than perhaps historians will accord him.

Back with the motorcycle escort outside Independence Palace the parachutist colonel Kao van Tri, whom Diem had just promoted, was beginning to wonder why his two generals who had gone into the august palace five hours before did not come out. Tri telephoned and was told they were under arrest. Tri informed the palace that his two chiefs had gone there in good faith and that if they were not released he would be back with troops to free them. They were freed immediately.

Meanwhile Trinh minh The, who arrested the generals in the first place, on May 4, had been sent back to his troops. He started marching at the head of his men across a bridge and fell, shot in the back. Anyone might have done it, for he was a man of ferocious cruelty. One of his own soldiers, resentful of Trinh's betrayal of their spiritual leader, may have chosen that moment to administer divine retribution as he saw it, or it may have been an agent of Le van Vien. Reasons for shooting Trinh minh The were so many no one tried to sort them out. Besides, in the wider picture he was unimportant.

Papers in America were rolling off the press by that time, bearing big headlines of Bao Dai's ouster by the revolutionary committee. As we have said, no questions were asked about said committee: the Saigon riots, the trampling of Bao Dai's portrait under foot, and his burning in effigy were represented to newspaper readers avidly buying extras as the mass uprising of a nation marching toward democracy.

Yet, for a brief spell on Sunday morning in far away Saigon, General Vy had his moment of glory. Ninety per cent of the army's generals had made known their willingness to follow him. General Le van Ty, his chief of staff, insisted on going back to the palace around mid-day and announcing their decision to Diem's revolutionary committee, just to do the thing correctly. Vy permitted two generals to go along as an escort. For the information of senators who might someday be interested in peering into the careers of Vietnamese generals to ascertain whether they were the recipients of favors by or subsequent generals and ambassadors, the name of one of them was Minh and the other was Don.

Around 3 p. m. General Don returned, alone, with the stupefying news that Le van Ty, unconditionally loyal to Vy three hours before, had moved

back into Diem's camp, and that Minh had gone with him.

Trinh minh The, Nguyen thanh Phuong with his 25,000 Cao Dai troops, and now Le van Ty and Minh had, one after another, crossed the field in this strange game of sell-out and

double-cross. No one appears to have considered that the leaders on whom we were staking our big experiment were considerably less than stable. In America our man's triumph was hailed as a victory. That he was hated, and the victory paid for by the American taxpayer, was never mentioned. Time magazine of August 9, 1963, called it "Diem's Finest Hour."

In America the wild exultation over Vietnam's "spontaneous" rejection of the monarchy lasted just one day; then, as suddenly as it appeared, splashed across front pages, it abruptly ended with a lame statement to the effect that a constitutional monarchy was foreseen in South Vietnam. Nothing more was said.

Professor Fishel burst into Vo Lang's room in the Dupont Plaza Hotel in a towering rage. Throwing a crumpled newspaper to the floor, he exclaimed, "Those imbeciles; they are afraid of their shadows! I know who is behind this! It's that bunch in the embassy in Saigon!"

The paper contained not a line about the new "republic." The students demonstrations had miraculously disappeared from print. Someone, somewhere, had said, "Enough. Take it easy," and the whole tele-commanded performance was halted. Who, using America's prestige and funds, decided to abolish the throne in South Vietnam and make America's man a president while General Lawton Collins was out of the country, and out to stay if they had any say in the matter? That is a question the American public has a right to ask.

Sunday papers across America carried an International News Service story under a Washington dateline of April 30 signed by Don Dixon. "Three senators have thrown their support behind the State Department's backing of South Vietnam's controversial Premier Ngo dinh Diem. Diem has become the target of strong French criticism," wrote Mr. Dixon. (Note: the criticism was always French. Vietnamese were pictured as solidly behind their premier.) Then note the order in which senatorial support is listed. "Senate GOP leader Knowland (Calif.) expressed hope the French would

‘stop pulling the rug out from under Premier Diem and give him a chance to succeed,’ ” began the opening four-inch paragraph that made Knowland Diem’s guarantor. “Knowland added that if the French make any attempt to restore ‘colonialism’ to that area they will fail. He said. The age of colonialism in Asia is dead.’ ”

Next came Senator Humphrey’s statement of position, summed up in one inch of 8-point type. Diem, said Humphrey,

is “the best hope we have in South Vietnam and any comments about the leadership in the war-torn country should be aimed at Bao Dai, the Chief of State now living on the French Riviera.” Diem and Bao Dai, as Vo Lang had discovered, were the only Vietnamese names Senator Humphrey knew.

Mike Mansfield’s plug for Diem ran to an inch and threequarters, but, coming at the end of the column as it did, the reader might suspect that Mansfield was going along in support of Knowland’s and Humphrey’s boy. “Senator Mansfield (D. Mon.) demanded that the U. S. cut off all aid to South Vietnam,” wrote Mr. Dixon, “if the ‘racketeers’ revolt’ waged by the rebel Binh Xuyen forces overthrows the Diem government.”

It was an old refrain. Never did American aid to Vietnam bolster the country against the Communist enemy to the north; always it strengthened the grip of a family against their countrymen. And each year when foreign aid appropriations came up in the American Congress, opponents of the throw-away program inexorably ruining America, economically and in the eyes of the world, were told that to cut the aid appropriation would hinder American foreign policy.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
NEW ACTORS ON THE STAGE

After the third of May, 1955, there was no threat, in Saigon at least, to the government the United Nationalist Front had rejected. True, as one moved from the capital the central government’s authority diminished, trailed off and gradually ceased to exist, but firm censorship in Saigon and the news blackout in America could prevent the American public from hearing about this. The rest of the world did not matter.

Le van Vien could hold out indefinitely in his swamps. Tran van Sioai and his embarrassing associate, Bacut, the wild man of the Hoa Hao, were

more vulnerable in their stronghold to the west, so it was the Hoa Hao that Diem prepared to wipe out first. In the meantime the reasons for the radio and press violence against the French, and attempts to blame them for the crisis which destroyed part of Saigon, were becoming clear. The treaty of independence accorded France the right to maintain troops in South Vietnam as protection for the European population and to protect the country against the Vietminh. Diem and the Americans around him wanted those troops out. No one considered for a moment that a time might come when Americans would wish with all their hearts to have European help back there again.

The Los Angeles Times of Wednesday, May 11, 1955, headed its European bureau report, "Dulles Tells Faure to Support Diem " The brutal, ultimatum-like headlines gave many Americans a burst of pride, a feeling of "That's telling them!" Edgar Faure, premier of France at the time, feared that weeks of radio incitement and Colonel Lansdale's mimeographed sheets, reports of which were in his desk, might touch off a massacre of French civilians in South Vietnam.

This Los Angeles Times account of the exchange of notes between Washington and Paris continued, "Secretary of State Dulles last night issued a virtual ultimatum to France that she support the native South Vietnamese Government of Premier Ngo dinh Diem and if necessary withdraw all or part of her 90,000 French Expeditionary Force. Dulles used stern lan

guage shorn of diplomatic euphemisms to enlist France's earnest support of Diem as the West's only visible hope of saving Indochina from Communist envelopment."

Monsieur Faure knew that Ho chi Minh had no army left after the Pyrrhic victory of Dien Bien Phu, that in reality the French government had done nothing to oppose Diem save protest against his anti-French radio diatribes which made Goebbels' pre-war blasts seem weak by comparison. The next sentence made him shake his head: "He [Dulles] also warned that the new Vietnam native army is still so far from being ready for combat after 18 months of training by the United States Army that it could not defend the country if France does withdraw her forces." Why then, Faure asked himself, do they tell us to get out?

“Faure indicated France might accept Diem if he broadens his government and agrees to Emperor Bao Dai’s continuance as titular chief of state and if Ngo dinh Diem abates his militant anti-French attitude. Faure asked Dulles who would protect French lives and property in Vietnam against Diem’s antiFrench crusade if the French expeditionary force is withdrawn. Dulles replied the United States would in any case use her full influence to insure respect for French lives and property. He said public opinion in the United States has reached the state where it would be excessively difficult for the United States to participate in Diem’s removal from power.”

The Premier leaned back and reflected. The men who produced the inflammatory sheets in his file would use their full influence to insure respect for French lives and property, he was told. That was not good enough. And nothing could be done about Diem because the organized press campaign had whipped the public into a state where nothing but the policies of the faceless clique doing the inciting would be acceptable.

“Why did you give me this particular paper?” Premier Faure asked his aide.

“Reports from the European bureau of the Los Angeles Times go into a special file,” he was told. “The bureau chief is a Rear Admiral in the United States Navy Reserve; consequently they are considered semi-official.”

All of these seemingly unimportant details, overlooked by a preoccupied public, are taken into consideration in the modem, airplane-spanning world of diplomacy. One American overseas press bureau out of three is on a list in the recesses of interior ministries as a branch post of Central Intelligence. Each dispatch is thereafter studied for mdications of biases that will affect policy. At a time when American newspaper

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readers were aghast at the refusal of the French air force to accept American command in event of war, not one reader in a million took notice of the coincidence that the columns of Marguerite Higgins were sermons of praise for the Algerian rebels, or that before the Algerian revolt they had been antiFrench in Vietnam. The French air ministry watching the sinuous twistings of Egyptian, Russian and Chinese plots and counterplots in the Algerian revolt noticed it, and in the minds of officers assigned to study and tabulate the daily press, was the conviction, true or false, that Marguerite

Higgins' husband, in his third floor office of the Pentagon, had read and presumably approved her column the day before.

Certainly Franco-American relations were not helped by the Los Angeles Times as Diem purged his army of officers suspected of being pro-French and heaped honors on the friends and relatives promoted to command as he prepared his offensive, against the Hoa Hao in the west. The battle was to last from May 25 until the end of July 1955. While Diem's fifty battalions were locked with the twenty battalions of regulars, plus an unknown number of guerrillas, under Tran van Sioai and Bacut, Le van Vien's Binh Xuyen crept back to the gates of Saigon and from ten miles outside of town threatened to cut the national army's supply lines.

While this battle was at its height a special Vietnam number of the New Leader, published by the American Labor Conference on International Affairs, appeared in America, dated June 27, 1955, written in its entirely by Mr. Joseph Buttinger. It is unlikely that any American conservative deigned to read the political journal of American labor, but the American left read it. Labor unionists read it. Reprints were sold by the thousands at 15(J each or 100 copies for $9.50. And some thinking American, somewhere in our vast country, should have torn himself away from a television set long enough to read every word in this sixteen-page magazine. If it is not someday spread out on a table and thoroughly dissected by a congressional committee delving into the whys and wherefores of our policy in South Vietnam, it will be because Senator Mansfield and Hubert Humphrey brought the weight of the Democratic party and Walter Reuther's unions into play to prevent it.

What do we conclude from a study of this special number of New Leader headed "Are We Saving South Vietnam?" in which the answer was inferred to be yes but was actually no? First, that American labor was meddling in foreign policy and that its weight was behind Ngo dinh Diem.

The next question is: who is Joseph Buttinger? What was his interest in Vietnam? New Leader described him as vice chairman of the International Rescue Committee and added that the International Rescue Committee sent him on a mission to South Vietnam in the fall of 1954, after which he became "one of the leading American champions of the free Vietnamese." He is an Austrian socialist, naturalized American, and "from 1935 to 1938 he was chairman of the Central Committee of the Socialist Underground

Movement in Vienna"—in other words, a socialist revolutionary. When Hitler marched into Austria, Mr. Buttinger went to America, and sometime within his first few years there became active in the International Rescue Committee, which sent him back to Europe as its European director in 1946 and 1947. This was the period when American labor delegate Irving Brown also was abroad, organizing the American-financed unions that were to serve politically as striking fists for native socialist parties, African revolutionary leaders, and eventually Europe's pro-Communist united socialist fronts. New Leader ended its biographical notes with, "Since his IRC mission to South Vietnam, he has begun a work on that nation." After one visit!

What else can we learn about this Mr. Buttinger who interpreted South Vietnam politics for America's thirteen and a half million unionized workmen and x number of white-collar socialists? The best way to find out is by analyzing his report. Somewhere it should express his credo.

For thirteen pages Mr. Buttinger rambled through specious explanations of how Diem came to power, attacks on the sects, the Binh Xuyen, the French, and Graham Greene for questioning America's wisdom. General Collins was praised for defending Diem during the General Hinh crisis but charged with turning against him in March, 1955. (It is hard to fix the exact date when Buttinger himself turned against Diem, but turn against him he did in the end, just before the blowup came, when to stay on the bandwagon any longer threatened to become embarrassing.)

All the arguments of socialist dialectics are to be found in this New Leader propaganda piece making anti-colonialism a key-note, and interference in Vietnam's internal politics the official foreign policy of American labor. On page thirteen, however, we find the kernel we are seeking. "Anti-colonials among the Left parties in France," wrote Mr. Buttinger, of French socialists and Communists without actually naming them, "have always supported the originally correct solution of giving independence to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

headed by Ho chi Minh, after its establishment in 1945. Although the government of Ho chi Minh, was dominated by communists, this regime had a good chance of developing along democratic lines if French colonial policies had not driven the people of Vietnam into the communists' arms."

What New Leader and Joseph Buttinger are saying is that in 1945 we should have supported the man we were to fight in 1964, Ho chi Minh, the Moscow-trained revolutionary whose aim was the Communization of all Asia. Buttinger, the Austrian socialist, had seen government after government in which Communists were a minority succumb to Communist domination in Central Europe, yet here he has the effrontery to write, and New Leader the effrontery to print, the statement that, although the 1945 government of Vietnam was headed by an admitted lifetime Communist terrorist and dominated by Communists, it "had a good chance of developing along democratic lines." What an insult to our intelligence! So Ho chi Minh domination is what "anti-colonialists among the Left parties in France" always wanted, and "French colonial policies" are responsible for everything that went wrong, states the man who headed the International Rescue Committee mission to South Vietnam.

Nothing more need be said of Joseph Buttinger. The above statement of principles should be borne in mind through the developments that follow. But what of the International Rescue Committee, of which he is vice chairman?

The American public, even the segment that is suspicious of anything remotely connected with Ford Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations and other groups used as political bulldozers and transmission belts for the international left, has never shown any curiosity about the IRC. That it was presented as an organization helping refugees escape from communism was enough, and on that favorable facet of IRC the publicity spotlight was constantly focused. Whether "international" meant that the Rescue Committee was part of an international chain, or an American committee operating in the sixteen capitals listed in its letterhead, was never clearly stated. All that was immediately discernible when Joseph Buttinger drew attention to the IRC by his pro-Diem activity in 1955 was that said committee was founded in 1936. Angier Biddle Duke was its president at the time of the Buttinger mission and Leo Cherne, executive director of the Research Institute of America, served as chairman. Mrs. Kermit Roosevelt was listed as secretary and Eric M. Warburg as treasurer.

There were the usual joiners whose names are found on the

rolls of liberal organizations in America. Christopher Emmet was there, but with Emmet and the crowd of Americans automatically associated with the Americans for Democratic Action were the inevitable conservatives, roped in on the belief that they were fighting communism, not just engaging in a family power struggle between Communists and socialists.

Monsignor Bela Varga, the Hungarian priest who headed Hungary's last free government, was listed as a member of the board of directors. "What can you tell us about this man Buttinger?" Monsignor Varga was asked by this author. "He alone was responsible for breaking the anti-Communist front in Hungary," was the answer. "Then, Monsignor Varga, what are you doing on that Rescue Committee?" The answer was a cryptic smile.

Sometime in 1951, while the British were struggling to suppress the Mau Mau terrorists of the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya, whose bloody orgies and revolting oath-taking are described by Robert Ruark in his book Uhuru, a Kikuyu named Mungai Njoroge arrived in New York. An unnamed pen pal in Rye, New York, had contacted Njoroge concerning a scholarship. The International Rescue Committee saw that the Kikuyu got through Stanford University Medical School and in 1958 sent him home with supplies and operating funds equalling $30,000 per year, plus a promise of $100,000 to build a hospital and set up village clinics. The Mau Maus were badly mauled and were in dire need of doctors at the time Njoroge was brought to America. The possibility definitely exists that correspondence between a pen pal in Rye, New York, and a member of the tribe perpetrating the horrible atrocities in Kenya, was not accidental. And a deep suspicion that the IRC's education of "Dr. Mungai Njoroge" was part of a wider plan might seem "lunatic fringe" if the private anti-colonialist war of the IRC did not somehow, invariably, come to light in every area of the world where America's allies were faced with revolts. The "refugees" for whom Angier Biddle Duke and Joseph Buttinger begged donations and American visas could be bona fide refugees from communism; or they could be murderers being sought by the French in Algeria, the Portuguese in Angola, or our allies faced with a Communist-backed rebellion anyplace in the world. In 1965 Njoroge was the pro-Red defense minister of Kenya.

It is with the feeling that a corner of a curtain has been lifted that a researcher must contemplate the importance of Joseph Buttinger's article in New Leader against the background of the profession of faith to be found in Buttinger's

eulogizing of Ho chi Minh. Thinking Americans at the time ignored the propaganda front's existence as they read papers filled with accounts of Diem's victories.

In western Cochin China the fight against the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao continued. Trinh minh The's 2,500 men, who had been bought off in the spring before the showdown in Saigon, promptly deserted and were thereafter, until late 1963, referred to as Communists. The one group from whom no one expected anything, then or ever, was the Buddhists. Numerically the biggest body in the country, they drifted. Buddhism had slowly foundered into a mire of oriental somnolence. To its followers it offered inertia and called it wisdom. Buddhism did nothing, and graced it with such adorning words as "reflection" and "tolerance." Its branches were countless, but whether it was family-type Buddhism or the ascetic with precious names such as "the perfumed lotus of the Jade Fountain," Buddhism presented no threat of force to come as Diem set out to break the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai.

On July 27, 1955, government troops in the west abandoned the campaign, with nothing settled, and moved back to break Le van Vien's encirclement of Saigon. While the troop movements were taking place, Joseph Buttinger was busy composing a letter to Diem in his sumptuous apartment at 336 Central Park West in New York. This letter must remain one of the most interesting epistles ever written by a private, naturalized American citizen to the head of a foreign state; typewritten, it runs to nine pages and it ranges from desultory rambling to unctuousness. Its perusal is well worth the effort. The first paragraph congratulated Diem on his victory over the sects and expressed Mr. Buttinger's conviction that, from the first, neither the French nor the sects would be able to overthrow Diem's government. (Always there is the assumption on the part of Buttinger that the French were out to destroy his man.)

"Your ambassador in Washington, Mr. Chuong, has probably kept you informed about the activities that have developed around my efforts to work up support for your policies and your government in the United States," continued this foreignborn socialist, whose judgment and aims were already open to question by his support of Ho chi Minh. Questions continually come to mind as one studies this letter. It was not Buttinger's business to promise the head of a country to which he had made one visit that he would

keep American support behind him. Could it be that Buttinger, more anti-colonialist than anti-Communist, had been playing a political game in South Vietnam before Diem went back there, to the point of

perhaps having a hand in the rise to power which has never been satisfactorily explained? In sum: Is the Rescue Committee out-and-out political?

"You may have seen or heard of the last piece I wrote entitled 'An Analysis of the Conflict Between the United States and French Policies in Vietnam,' " Buttinger continued. "This piece marks the end of a period in my work for Vietnam. From now on 1 will have to work in a different manner (emphasis ours). Your decision to start a public relations program in the United States is one reason for this. Much of what I have been doing in the way of propaganda and information will now be done by Mr. Oram and his associates. I will continue to support these efforts and advise and help Mr. Oram in every possible way, but my main efforts will go into the project of writing an understandable book on Vietnam for the American public."

Thus it was that the American public, as taxpayers, paid for the ponderous tome of socialist propaganda published by Praeger in 1958, which said public would never have bought over the counter. One or both of two American agencies must have underwritten the publication of Buttinger's book, "The Smaller Dragon," for no publishing house would have touched it on a free enterprise basis. And it might be added that conservative books are rarely found in Praeger's catalogues.

There was other evidence of the "one big happy family" in the paragraph dealing with Mr. Buttinger's switch from direct to indirect propaganda methods. In 1951, when the IRC was taking up the Kikuyu from Kenya, a former Young Communist Leaguer named Marvin Liebman was public relations man writing letters and newspaper articles that men who were set up to front for the committee would sign. New York Times of March 12, 1962, states that Liebman left the Communist party in 1945. Ten years later, when the lucrative South Vietnam public relations account could have been his for the taking, Liebman was running the Committee of One Million, which opposes admission of Red China to UN. So the Vietnam

account was thrown to Liebman's friend and former associate, Harold Oram, whose lack of knowledge of Vietnam was, if anything, an asset.

After giving Diem a glimpse of what his friend Mr. Buttinger would do for him in the future, there is a sudden change of tack to the letter we are studying. "Before i retire to the study, however," Diem's gratuitous—or was the taxpayer paying him also—propagandist went on, "I should like to express myself in a personal and confidential manner on how 1 see a

few aspects of the Vietnamese problem in the context of American foreign policy, and how I regard the chances of American public support for this policy when the inevitable international crisis over Vietnam will be upon us next year."

From the eight pages that followed an alert public could have formed a blue-print of how said public was being worked. "Korea is an almost frozen issue," Buttinger wrote. "It also cannot be handled outside the United Nations." And Formosa was static. But unless a drastic change were brought about, Buttinger warned Diem, American leaders would come in for little criticism if they diminished the danger of war at the expense of Vietnam. A vast propaganda campaign in which American taxpayers would pay for the drive to condition themselves for more aid—until eternity if necessary—was the answer.

There was an almost absurd childishness in Buttinger's efforts to ingratiate himself in this rambling letter. "The French are now very active in the United States," he told Diem. "They even take the trouble to follow my activities, trying to influence or silence me. The French ambassador and his information service have both been after me for several weeks. They have tried to get the International Rescue Committee to disavow my activities publicly. They know of course that they cannot influence me, but they try hard enough and sometimes succeed in preventing me from influencing others."

All of the anti-colonialist dialectics with which socialists insulate revolutionaries newly arrived to power are in this letter. Diem is particularly urged to give thought to what the British might say in America, for "the democratic world has a sentimental attachment to the mere word election," says Buttinger, adding that the British "are regarded as the possessors of great wisdom in the international affairs."

After each step forward in the Buttinger letter there is a pause, an offering of profuse apologies for appearing to be telling Diem what to do. At the same time, before Diem's eyes is a constant reminder of what Buttinger has done for him, that Buttinger is being persecuted by the French for his loyalty to Diem but, barring any false step on Diem's part, that loyalty will continue. (Surprise, and an amused, cynical smile were the only reactions of French Ambassador Bonnet, on being shown the letter by this author.)

Buttinger next warned Diem that American ignorance and French intrigues were not his only problems in America. He said, "Increasingly we have to contend with other opponents, namely personalities and political groups of South Vietnam

who are dissatisfied with your course." What follows is nothing more nor less than an admission of dishonesty by the man who for the next six years operated behind two front organizations to keep America persuaded that in all Vietnam there was no alternative to Diem.

"Up to now I felt completely justified in disregarding the complaints, criticisms and demands of these circles," wrote Buttinger, whose conscience did not bother him very much, since said complaints were never admitted to Teddy Roosevelt's granddaughter, married to a Columbia University professor, nor to the host of other well-meaning women Buttinger was mobilizing to sell America on Ngo dinh Diem. He went on: "I had been exposed to much of this while still in Saigon, and although I learned a great deal from some of your critics, all my writings testify to the fact that they had no influence on my positive views of your personality and your political course." Though he had neither swerved in his support of Diem, nor told anyone else what he had learned, Buttinger warned that in the future criticisms should not be taken lightly, nor left unanswered. For they would find willing ears, and "the people who agitate against you and your government in the international field will achieve at least one thing: they will create doubts as to the character of the regime and the validity of your democratic intentions."

Buttinger is smooth: "I hesitate to approach this difficult subject. If I express doubts created by information critical to your regime and if I ask you questions which seem to imply criticism on my part, I do it in a spirit of

respect and friendship for your person and driven only by my concern for the cause which you represent." After this paving of the way Buttinger led up to the "great deal of counter-propaganda" which he was receiving. In the world of Marxist reasoning there are no adverse reports, no unpleasant facts. These are always "counter-propaganda." Various persons and groups with a variety of motives were trying to influence Buttinger against the man to whom he was writing. Buttinger admits to Diem, and to him only, that he knows nothing about Vietnamese politics, but— and now read the following carefully:

"To give you an example. I am now receiving material from Paris containing the complaints the Vietnamese Socialist Party has against your government. [Not "the French" this time, but French socialists acting as intermediaries, which made it another matter!] I have received such material from Paris directly and also from the Socialist Bureau in London, which is a central office of the socialist parties in the West. Through this

Socialist Bureau all the socialist parties in the West have been informed about the complaints of the Vietnamese Socialist Party against your government. Some of the complaints have already found expression in the press of a number of socialist parties in Europe. As you know, I lived in Paris for a number of years before the war and while there I became acquainted with many of the leading French socialists. I am therefore not surprised that they would try to appeal to me at the urging of their Vietnamese friends."

There is a complete absence of any sense of national barriers of loyalties as Mr. Buttinger candidly and bluntly speaks for Vietnamese socialists, French socialists, British socialists and socialists of Western Europe. The reader suddenly finds himself in a world void of national loyalty, where a passport is a thing of convenience to be changed when advantage will accrue to the international brotherhood by a change of flag. The brief glimpse into international ramifications that this paragraph provides, with its veiled threat to Ngo dinh Diem that a world brotherhood was likely to align itself against him if the complaints did not cease, opens a new avenue of conjecture against which to measure developments in Asia, Africa and around the world. In fact, one might add in every area covered by Mr. Buttinger's International Rescue Committee activity. Analyzed with

the international socialist front in mind, which Buttinger unequivocally held over the head of Diem, many of the things that developed later in America's tragic experiment in South Vietnam take on more the appearance of part of a plot than a fact of circumstance.

The next two pages of Mr. Buttinger's wordy letter cushion the delicate point to which America's new citizen was leading while promising American support and speaking for an international socialist secret society. "During the last few weeks," wrote Mr. Buttinger, "I have heard more criticism through an acquaintance I made in the course of my work in defending your government. I have met Mr. Milton Sachs, an old champion —in Spite of his youth—of the cause of free Vietnam and a man whom you can justly count among your strongest supporters and admirers in the U. S. Mr. Sachs told me he had known you already in the U. S. and saw you last in Paris at the end of 1953." Gradually the pieces fall into place as we reconstruct what may be called the crime of Diem's installation in power.

"Mr. Sachs, as you probably know, has been severely— and I think unjustly—criticized by American officials for his anti-French position during the time when unconditional sup

port of the French in Indochina was still U. S. policy," said Buttinger in his warming-up of Diem toward Sachs, before introducing the unpleasant matter at hand. The warming-up for each new touchy subject, it will be noticed, was always prefaced by a claim that the writer, or the person he was lauding, had been persecuted by the French for supporting Diem. In Political Alignments of Vietnamese Nationalists (published by the Department of State, Office of Intelligence and Research, as report number 3708, in 1949), this Milton Sachs whom Buttinger praises, published an article extolling and whitewashing the Vietminh, who were then killing Frenchmen and a decade later were murdering post-college Americans in Vietnam while Sachs indoctrinated students in Brandeis University.

At last Buttinger reached the point: Among the friends of Mr. Sachs was the Vietnamese socialist leader, Ho huu Tuong, to whose extolling he devoted the next page and a half. Mr. Buttinger saw no reason why Ho huu Tuong should not be free to work for his opinions among the nationalists of South Vietnam. Buttinger admitted that he had also talked to Dr. Nguyen ton Hoan, the Dai Viet party leader, but Diem was never left in doubt that

the writer's ideas of democratic government would be satisfied if Ho huu Tuong, the socialist, were permitted to come above ground and indulge in politicking in Diem's preserve. The suspicion grows that Mr. Buttinger was interested in having a socialist protege on the spot and with a following when the day came for the Ngo dinh family's succession, not knowing that in the mind of the Ngo dinhs there was to be no succession.

The "or else" implied in Mr. Buttinger's letter was delicately handled. While making it clear that he was dissatisfied with the way things were being run, he ended with a promise that, no matter what Diem's reaction to his criticizing might be, he would "continue my efforts to mobilize American support for your policy."

Thus, through the efforts of a foreign-born socialist commanding a Marxist audience around the world, and with the buying power of America's almost unlimited aid to South Vietnam at his disposal, U. S. public opinion, before which Foster Dulles in his note to Premier Faure had claimed to be powerless, was hardened to a point where any policy contrary to that of Joseph Buttinger, Milton Sachs and Diem's public relations man was out of the question.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A VICTORY FOR "DEMOCRACY"

Back in the embassy-at-large in Paris brother Luyen was not taking it easy while the offensive in Western Vietnam was going on. The credit he acquired at home the moment General Collins was recalled was exploited to the utmost. Luyen was soon in cloak-and-dagger work up to his neck, opening offices in Geneva, Rome and Bonn, paying informers to report on anti-Diem refugees in Paris, and buying cameras small enough to hide in a match-box and pocket-size recorders for tapping telephones.

Luyen was not the only one to profit by General Collins' recall. With the change of American ambassadors in Saigon our charge d'affaires acquired an advantage also. He had been there through the crisis and was credited with having a direct pipeline to the source of power and information, which there is no denying he had. The Vietnamese are inveterate gossips. Observations, scraps of conversation, every bit of information picked up by a faceless world of servants, nha-ques and petty functionaries happy to gain face by imparting something someone else has not heard—all these travel by word of mouth with the rapidity of Asia's age-old "bamboo wireless." By midsummer of 1955 nowhere in Vietnam was the American embassy's

charge d'affaires referred to other than as "Madame Nhu's man in the American embassy," a privileged position that served Madame Nhu more than it did America.

Luyen, in his maneuvers to extract every advantage he could from his share in the happy turn of events, fixed his sights on His Excellency Pham duy Khiem, the ambassador to Paris. Briefly, Khiem had the handling of the sixteen million francs per month allotted for maintaining both his own embassy and Luyen's establishments, and Luyen wanted to get his hands on that money. As long as Madame Chuong held the strings in Saigon, Khiem was secure, but this did not prevent Luyen from probing.

Vo Lang, too, was riding high since the mission to Washington, so Luyen too sent him, along with advisors including this author, secretaries to give him face, and a French former

collaborator claiming high connections in Bonn, to see what he could accomplish in Geneva at the Big-Four Conference of July 1955. The reason for the Vietnam mission, aside from an opportunity to put in a padded request for funds, was the report that Harold Stassen was to join Eisenhower at the conference. Stassen was handling America's foreign aid operations at the time, and Diem's team was hampered by the American procedure of paying out aid money against bills and vouchers, rather than turning the entire amount over to them at the beginning of the year, to spend as they pleased.

Stassen did not show up at the conference, so Luyen's complicated paper, showing why more money, allotted for several years in advance, should be handed over in a lump sum for the sake of efficiency, was never used. Luyen was ingenious, however, and managed to get things done despite the obstacles presented by American red tape. A slick-cover propaganda magazine in French, to be published in Paris, was proposed and immediately approved. The moment Luyen had an OK on his cost-estimate for the first year he had a piece of collateral backed by the U. S. government and was able to borrow enough to buy a small printing shop outright. A couple of issues of the magazine were put out, after which everyone forgot about it and the whole project was swept under the rug, leaving Luyen with a printing establishment.

When an appropriation was made to produce a propaganda film, Luyen and Vo Lang bought the best German movie and sound equipment available, instead of hiring an experienced crew and filming a good documentary. The film that resulted was worthless, but the equipment that remained represented a sizeable asset, besides which Vo Lang was making an animated film in his spare time as a hobby.

All of the ins and outs of the protracted negotiations that went on between Luyen and the Bank of Indochina for the purchase of certain bank property in Saigon will never be known. The essential facts were as follows: Saigon had authorized Luyen to buy the property, but seven hundred million francs was the maximum he was authorized to pay. The bank took a look at the violent radio and press incitement against the French and thought it not impossible that Diem and Nhu might use whipped-up emotions as justification for confiscating the property and paying nothing. Whether the report from Luyen's own advisor (a report that Luyen stalled until the bank came down to 500 million francs—he then concluded the deal on condition that they give him a receipt for 700 million to present to the American aid office) is true or not, we are never

likely to know; and too many things were happening on the Saigon scene for anyone to care.

It is not difficult to visualize the reaction of Diem and Nhu as they waded through Joseph Buttinger's letter in the ugly ochre and white palace in Saigon. Whatever Buttinger hoped his list of complaints and his naming the native socialist leader and the head of the Dai Viet party as sources of information would accomplish, the only thing he really did achieve was to impress on Diem and Nhu the importance of muzzling their critics. It was the beginning of a program that was selfperpetuating. Nhu already had an estimated seventy thousand secret police and informers operating within his personal party, the Can Lao Nhan Vi, the Humanist Workers Revolutionary party. A parallel network was set up with spies informing on their neighbors, Nhu's informers, and each other. Buttinger had, no doubt, wanted reforms, even though his idea of reform was more liberty of action for Vietnam's socialists. Diem replied with more suppression. His weapon was fear; but as fear of the family at the top spread among the masses, fear of the masses increased, in direct proportion, at the top. Soon concentric rings of informers and security forces, having nothing to do with the

approaching struggle against communism, were stretching out in ever-widening circles.

Michigan State University, with the Detroit police force to draw upon as instructors, was training police for Diem as part of the University's Vietnam Project. Soon everyone suspected everyone else, and the veritable hell in which Vietnamese lived, whatever their class or group, contributed more than the unending war in the hinterlands to the weariness that eventually spread over the country.

Weariness, cynicism and discontent could be handled by concentration camps and efficient police, but continued and blind American support was necessary to the establishment of the concentration camps and police forces. "Madame Nhu's man in the American embassy" was not to be permitted to entertain doubts. No word of the brewing storm must reach him or his colleagues or successors. Nothing must ever dispel the existing climate wherein any bearer of complaints or bad reports to Americans was immediately turned over to one of Diem's or Nhu's countless secret police. With such cooperation at the source, Mr. Buttinger, "working in a different manner," as he put it, "to continue my efforts to mobilize American support for your policy" would take care of the rest. But, as the pressure beneath the Saigon lid increased, Mr. Buttinger's

and Mr. Oram's machines, like the concentric rings of police in Vietnam, had to expand also.

The lesson an astute political science student could have learned in the years to follow was that the most ruthless of dictators can oppress and imprison, not only with impunity but with "liberal" support and approval, if he has the foresight to employ a good public relations firm. What he does he must always do as a "liberal" and he must take the precaution of flattering professors, writers, politicians and journalists with his personal acquaintance.

Thus John Osborn's account of what had transpired {Life, May 13, 1957) was in the best style of renaissance admiration of Caesar Borgia. "Diem in the period from March to September [1955], moved against his other non-Communist enemies, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, with a masterly combination of force, cajolery and bribery."

As a matter of fact, even as Diem and Nhu acted on the advice of Mr. Buttinger as they interpreted it, a battle was raging in the inundated

mangrove forests around Rungsat, where the Saigon River pours into the sea. Despite their familiarity with the terrain Le van Vien's six battalions, which could have held out for years as scattered guerrillas and in fact have held out as such ever since, were helpless against the gunboats, landing craft and other light naval units Diem was able to send up the waterways. The battle lasted from September 20 to October 12, 1955, and when it ended Le van Vien's son, Colonel Le Paul, was in Diem's hands. Two years previously it was Le Paul who wrested the route between Saigon and Cape St. Jacques from the Communists. After the Cape St. Jacques route operation he was entrusted with the defense of the strategic point of Phu My which he held against a year of Communist attacks, though he was only twenty-four years old in 1953.

After October 12 the Binh Xuyen ceased to be a force capable of threatening the government. Le van Vien left for France on November 7, inspiring John Osborne to tell America {Life, May 13, 1957), "Since then the sects have disintegrated as political and military factors." The same refrain was repeated in hundreds of other American news dispatches and magazines, though, actually, the exact opposite was true. There was no news of them in American papers, that was all; nor of Le van Vien's son. One solution might have been to bring him to trial, but that would only make him a hero. Another would have been to put him on a plane and exile him, with his father, but that was not Diem's way, nor Nhu's. In the end they stuck

Le Paul in Phu-Lam prison, in Cholon, with some of his men, and amused themselves by making them as miserable as possible.

With the Binh Xuyen broken and the sects dispersed the table was still not swept clean. One other power, theoretically over and above the Ngo dinhs, still existed. That was Bao Dai, the emperor, and the machinery was in motion for removing him. Carefully, minutely, the rigged plebiscite was set up. Nothing was left undone. In America the propaganda barrage, which had been interrupted at the time of the battle of Saigon early in 1955, was resumed in full swing. The choice offered was a republic under Diem or a monarchy under Bao Dai. It was from the first a plebiscite without claim to legality, if we agree that legality comes from below. For Bao Dai, whose legitimacy was undisputed, had under pressure appointed Diem to be his prime minister. From there Diem prepared to move into the presidency by

deposing the emperor who appointed him, by not offering the people a choice of any candidate but himself.

October 23, 1955, was the date set for the voting, and in America the drums were beating for Diem's forthcoming gift of "democracy" to his people. Considering the public relations machine at work and the amount of American aid diverted back to New York to keep it going, often over tables or under tables in the Overseas Press Club, there are a number of questions that should have interested Senator Fulbright's committee which was supposed to be investigating such practices in mid1962. For on September 30, 1955, less than a month before the much-publicized referendum. Colliers Magazine came out with its David Schoenbrun hatchet job on Bao Dai.

Paul Smith was editor of Collier's and Diana Hirsch was its foreign editor. Neither replied to the letters this writer sent asking how Schoenbrun happened to write and Collier's publish such an article at that time, telling the Vietnamese that "Diem must not only remove Bao Dai, but do it in such a way that he no longer has any usefulness as a symbol of Vietnamese unity."

Collier's foundered; and America's well-meaning, duped and swindled citizens, being led up a blind alley that went downhill, saw nothing suspicious about the venom with which Schoenbrun went after the monarch whom Ho chi Minh also wanted destroyed. The article that the European correspondent of Columbia Broadcasting System just happened to write was circulated in Vietnam by the information ministry, run by Ho chi Minh's former administrator of "justice." It proved

irrefutably that Bao Dai's ousting was what America wanted. Dangled in front of Vietnamese eyes before every organized march to the polls was the prospect that a resounding vote for what America wanted might make some of that aid money trickle down to the little man's level. Bao Dai was permitted no news space or campaigning.

Police made pre-referendum house-to-house visits to tell the citizens how to vote. The ballots, which met with Mike Mansfield's approval, were green on one end and red on the other. The red half, which is a lucky color, bore a picture of Diem. The green half, an unlucky color, was reserved for a picture of Bao Dai. The explanation was that many voters could not read, so

all they had to do was tear off the leader they rejected and throw his picture on the ground, after which they would insert the other half of the ballot in a thin envelope provided by the government and a policeman would escort them to the urn.

Few Vietnamese escaped being routed out to swell the "majority" which public relations man Harold Oram was to exploit for months to come, and still fewer of the cowed public were brave enough to drop transparent envelopes bearing green ballots into urns watched by one of Tran chanh Thanh's policemen. An old lady had her ears boxed for insisting that she had a right to be loyal to her Emperor. Scattered incidents were reported, but it was a victory for "democracy" all the way. Diem received 5,721,735 votes, Bao Dai 63,017—a surprisingly large figure, considering everything.

Thereafter, as Raymond Cartier was to observe, "the civil war, religious passions, power struggles between groups, the total lack of a national conscience, the corruption and the incompetence, made South Vietnam ungovernable. But these fatal consequences the Americans did not foresee when they evicted Europeans from empires which were much less necessary to their masters than to the subjected." (Paris Match, Sept. 5, 1964)

What the liberal team directing American policy achieved when they eliminated Bao Dai was a free hand for themselves. Thereafter there was no one who could tell their man to step down. Never for a moment did they stop to think that in a few years they might wish for a way to get the creature they had conjured back in the vase again.

Chaos was inevitable. The process of destroying Bao Dai, which Ho chi Minh had started, America finished with David Schoenbrun for a spokesman. With respect for emperor destroyed, respect for parents, law, tradition and everything that

made for stability began to crack. Diem and Nhu demonstrated that unlimited wealth accrued to the occupant of Independence Palace. With hereditary rule discredited each Vietnamese saw no reason why the man at the faucet should not be himself. Given money in sufficient quantities, a good public relations man could make anything look all right, and a family might remain in power forever.

Life magazine's editorial of November 7, 1955, hailed the results of the great referendum as "Figurehead's Fall." The same magazine a month later

(Dec. 5) spurred America to greater triumphs with the editorial appeal, "Let's not quit while winning!"

As Diem and his family surveyed the ledger at year's end from their palace in Saigon, the balance, on the whole, was satisfactory. Only one disappointment marred the record of unbroken victories; and it, unfortunately, was a matter that several million dollars of American aid money could not arrange to their satisfaction. It was the beginning of Diem's black file in the Vatican. Diem had not failed to notice that the Holy See took three weeks before recognizing Diem's victory over Bao Dai. The next annoyance started during his anti-French campaign. As Paris Match reported on Aug. 31, 1963, Diem demanded that missionaries sent to South Vietnam take an oath of allegiance to him. They refused, whereupon Diem accused them of being pro-Communist and proceeded to arrest Monsignor Sieltz, of the Society of Foreign Missions. The monsignor faced a prison sentence for "threatening the internal security of the state" when the Vatican stepped in and saved him.

Diem's next move was to request the robe of a cardinal for his brother. The importance of Rome's reaction to that request was highlighted by France-Soir of October 26, two day^ after the rigged plebiscite. "The only shadow on the scene for Mr. Diem is paradoxically the attitude of the Vatican. The Vatican has just named as Bishop of Saigon, not the candidate of Mr. Diem, who is his own brother, Monsignor Thuc, but an unknown priest named Hien. The blow for the President of the Council is harder, since Mr. Hien is considered lukewarm where he is concerned." c

Diem protested. Monsignor Thuc boarded a plane for Rome. France-Soir of December 29, 1955, told how, pending the outcome of Thuc's direct appeal to the Vatican to annul the Hien appointment, the papal order naming Hien apostolic vicar of Saigoft was held up by Diem's postal authorities, its seal broken and the papal order photocopied. "The Vatican main

tained its decision," wrote France-Soir, "and Vietnamese censors suppressed the announcement of Hien's elevation for several weeks, until priests announced the news from their pulpits and Hien himself used the word excommunication in regard to Diem."

The French weekly, Aux Ecoutes, of December 15, 1955, had carried a letter written from Saigon by a French Catholic officer. It is prophetic when

read nine years later: To fellow Catholics in France the officer wrote: “Because he affirms his Catholicism at the top of his voice, he [Diem] is supported by a great part of his French co-religionists who are unaware of the hypocrisy of his motives where they are concerned. His attitude is a characteristic abuse of confidence. If we continue to let ourselves be taken in by our good faith, the consequences will be heavy for us and the awakening brutal. The Catholics whom we wish to support will themselves tomorrow be the victims of either total occupation of their country by the Communists, or of an inevitable settling of counts in a double civil war and war of religion.”

The National Catholic Welfare Conference representative in Saigon as 1955 drew to a close was Father Patrick O’Connor, who showed himself capable of hitting Diem and his family and hitting them where it hurt, that is, among their Catholic supporters in America. In a radio report dated November 29, and in a press release of December 5, the Irish Father O’Connor lashed out at Diem’s interference with church affairs and the pressure he employed to get his older brother (who was also head of the family) made head of the Saigon diocese.

America, the Chicago Jesuit magazine, editorialized on Father O’Connor’s reports in its issue of December 10, 1955, under the heading “Church-State in Vietnam,” with the observation, “News that the government of South Vietnam is resorting to press censorship is disturbing enough. That the censorship should be coupled with interference in Church administration is downright perplexing, particularly since the free world has been given to understand that Pres. Ngo dinh Diem and democratic government are practically synonymous terms.

“According to an NC [National Catholic Welfare Conference] report dated November 26, the Vietnamese government has been indulging in some pretty childish antics in Saigon. As NC correspondent Rev. Patrick O’Connor relates, President Diem, for some reason or other, is opposed to the appointment of Bishop-elect Simon Nguyen van Hien as Vicar

Apostolic of Saigon. Censoring all news of Msgr. Hien’s impending consecration, the Government has requested the Holy See to change the appointment. While the authorities are not expected to interfere with the

consecration, the whispering campaign against the Bishop-elect and the ill will it has caused may continue to foment trouble.

"Moreover, Fr. O'Connor sees in the incident a reflection of a growing tendency in Vietnam to interfere in Church affairs. Priests' letters are opened in the post office. Rumors abound that the Church, bishops, priests and Catholic organizations may be in for government regimentation. The outcome may even be indirect restrictions on preaching and pressure on foreign missionaries to get out of Vietnam.

"This review has constantly supported Ngo dinh Diem, not on the ground of his Catholicism, but because he seemed to be the only available political figure capable of unifying Vietnam's variety of political-religious factions and ushering in an era of truly representative government. We trust our confidence is not about to be destroyed."

Few other American papers reported Diem's short struggle with the church at all. In a few weeks it was forgotten and Father O'Connor was once more solidly pro-Diem. Unfortunately, he never put himself in the place of Vietnam's majority when it was tyrannized by the Ngo dinhs.

A prominent Catholic anti-Communist in Chicago dismissed the America editorial with the remark that America's editor was soft on Communists. There was always some reason for avoiding looking any unpleasant report in the face. Father O'Connor's authorship of the original report was ignored, and the mass arrests, tortures and even executions of Vietnamese with no church or personal claims to Father O'Connor's sympathy were treated as of no concern.

A former French missionary, Father Jean Renou, who had spent thirty-seven years in the Orient, exclaimed to this author: "The man [Diem] is mad! He is undoing all we have accomplished in a hundred and fifty years! There was no ill-will between Catholics and Buddhists when he came into power. Now unless we can get him out quickly, we Catholics will suffer when he is gone, though we are not to blame for his actions." But his words bore no weight among Americans because he was French. There was always some reason for discrediting every sincere voice of warning and for believing the New York propagandists who, for an equal amount of money, would have gladly proved the opposite.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE BRAINWASHING MACHINE

1956 was a great year for the brainwashers using a fake anti-Communist campaign to clear the field for their men. They had a heyday. America was as a nation intoxicated. Never was a free people so mass-hypnotized and with such ease. It would not have been possible had the American public not wanted to believe, and believe they did. They swallowed anything, while Life magazine urged them on with thg stirring appeal; “Let’s not quit while winning.” It was the period of the “Bastion of the Free World” line, and glorification of America’s “Showcase for Democracy.”

Anyone who attempted to tell the truth became a target for vicious, well-directed whisper and letter-writing campaigns, which State Department boys breathlessly composing “White Paper” hooey on the guerrilla war in South Vietnam made raids on their passports and smeared them in government files. Long after a Supreme Court decision refused officialdom the right to deny passports to Communists, a loyal American writing a true report on conditions in South Vietnam could have his wings clipped with no explanation required. Such an attempt was made in 1959 on this author.

How was all this possible? It took a powerful machine, and the money it swallowed was gladly, willingly poured into its maw by the hoodwinked victims themselves. The 1962 Fulbright committee investigating the activity of public relations men in the service of foreign governments and heads of state carefully avoided swinging the spotlight too far into the workings of the Vietnam machine in America. Had they done so they would have found, floating on the body politic of America, a brainwashing organization that, like an iceberg, projected only its smaller part above the surface.

The visible part of the Diem propaganda machine in America was Harold L. Oram’s office at 8 West 40 Street, New York. This was the part registered with the Department of Justice. Whether Diem eventually turned against Oram and snarled “Dirty type!” over his hapless huckster’s inability to keep favorable reports in print and unfavorable reports out when

the tide began to turn is unknown. It may have been that Oram, like many others, saw the writing on the wall and decided to get out from under, for we find in Newsweek of July 30, 1962, the statement that public relations firm Kastor, Hilton, Chesley, Crawford and Atherton had picked up the account from Oram in 1961 and was letting it go. The year 1961 is

one to remember, for it was then that the scramble to disavow responsibility for Diem and his family started. Until then how much the wheeler-dealers made, operating for political reasons or profit, is conjectural. The fee for the Vietnam account was reported by Newsweek to be $100,000. Vietnamese reported that Oram's take was $24,000 per month plus expenses. (The latter must have been staggering.)

The first must for a public relations agent campaigning for a foreign president was associate membership in the Overseas Press Club in New York, where name writers gather. Drinks, dinners—bait for recognized writers willing to sign or write articles—these were all legitimate expenses, as were red-carpet, expense-paid, trips to Saigon, so that name writers could be flattered by Diem's acquaintance and at the same time say they had been there. Until the author of each glowing report published during the intoxication years is questioned under oath, we shall never know how many writers enjoyed a junket halfway around the world at the expense of the taxpayer.

January 1956 started with Mike Mansfield's "Reprieve in Vietnam" in Harper's magazine. It contained all the cliches of anti-colonialist dialectics. The French were the villains, and the generals bought out by American dollars were described as having rallied to Diem. Mike was "Diem's godfather" and the repetitious arguments he used would suggest that someone in Harold Oram's office wrote the piece for the busy, liberal senator to sign.

A month later O. K. Armstrong's "Biggest Little Man in East Asia" toured the world via the February 1956 Reader's Digest. How Armstrong happened to write it, no one asked. All that mattered was that Armstrong was convinced. He had seen one of Diem's "spontaneous" demonstrations at the airport.

When on March 4, 1956, the elections were held in which 123 handpicked members were elected to Diem's national assembly, the American press outdid itself. Time of March 19 insulted its readers' intelligence with the declaration, "Despite high-handed campaign regulations that hobbled any organized opposition to Diem, the election was no mere formality." The American public was never told that only Diem

approved candidates were allowed to run, or that in spite of Diem's precautions a Dai Viet party member was elected. He disappeared shortly thereafter and was never heard of again. Madame Nhu's election was hailed as a victory for our side; unmentioned was the fact that her constituency was an artificial one, created by grouping together the northern refugees who were being given land, homes and a dole. Even so, out of a possible 25,000 votes she gleaned only some 5,000.

Bombarded as Americans were by a constant stream of propaganda from official agencies and a slanted press, the constitution which Diem's handpicked constituent assembly drew up was associated in the American mind with that magic word "democracy." To the Vietnamese it brought only disillusionment. Instead of the right to speak freely and at given periods elect a leader of their own choosing, the constitution gave a stamp of legality to the abuses of the family in power. Diem's picking of his assembly was glossed over by his apologists with the explanation that "bandits" would have been elected otherwise. It followed naturally that the constitution drawn up by such an assembly was Diem-elected. Nguyen kahc Oanh, the Vietnamese attorney faced with a request to help write it or face arrest for opposing it, chose exile.

Diem's first thought was to assure himself of eleven years in power. Then, by a sort of hocus-pocus, he turned the constituent assembly he had selected into a legislative body. Without more ado the legislative and judicial powers of the country, as well as the executive, were in his hands. He could invite his critics to come into the open and discuss participation in his government, and, without a voice raised in protest from his slave assembly, arrest and sentence them to prison or execution when they came. If they feared to come, he held them up to the American public as proof of their unwillingness to cooperate.

Nowhere did any American paper report the crime perpetrated by Diem's and Nhu's policy on April 14, 1956. Colonel Le Paul, the twenty-seven-year-old son of Le van Vien, was at that time in Phu-lam prison and had been since his capture in October 1955. No charges had been filed against him and there had been no talk of a trial. For that matter, prisons and concentration camps were springing up all over South Vietnam, filled with men who were in them for less. On April 14 Le Paul was led out and put in a truck which set off in the direction of Rach-Cat. He was told that he was

being transferred. A short time later his body was lying beside the road four miles from Phu-Lam with his arms tied behind his back.

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The government announced that the military escort had shot him because he tried to escape. This event sent a tremor through the country: There were to be many such cases before the Diem myth exploded, but this was the son of a man who had followers, and not Communist ones, either.

The passing of each month swelled the ranks of those crying for revenge. The American press couldn't have cared less, and it is doubtful if the public would have been greatly concerned had they been told. Anyone against our man deserved anything that happened to him. When the pendulum swung back, seven years later in 1963, righteous citizens who had never heard of Le Paul's killing or of the thousands whose blood was on our man's hands rose up in indignation against those who were dumping the Ngo dinhs.

On July 6, 1956, it was Collier's turn once more to beat the drum. Having used the CBS European correspondent to ax Bao Dai in 1955, they called upon the CBS Far East ace, Peter Kalischer, to extol Nhu's "socialist state." Kalischer obligingly lauded Michigan State University's thirty-man team teaching political science, public administration, and helping to reorganize Diem's police force, while American officials assisted the Diem government with newsreels and documentaries and educational skits which touring Vietnamese actors produced from the backs of trucks. All of the hopes and conclusions Kalischer offered were false, but by the time the blowup came the publisher who printed his article had folded and the team that encouraged Kalischer had swept Vietnam under the rug.

What a year 1956 was! On August 1 Vital Speeches of the Day featured a flowery oration by Senator John F. Kennedy praising Diem. On September 15 it was the Saturday Evening Post with Demaree Bess almost breathless in his pontificating on our man. No letter to Demaree Bess, pointing out the gaping holes in the report he gave American readers in return for a fat check from Saturday Evening Post, was ever answered.

On September 20, 1956, Darrel Berrigen added his contribution to the campaign of deception, in the Reporter. Not a single American appeared to question Berrigen's story on grounds that if the Reporter printed it it must be false. People who wanted to be fooled forgot that in 1944-1945 Darrel Berrigen was undermining Chiang Kai-shek in the Saturday Evening Post

and that, as editor of the Bangkok World he was part of Arthur Larson's distrusted Information-Service in Bangkok. Reporter editor Phil Horton, when visited by this

writer on January 31, 1957, refused even to consider the possibility that he had contributed to diffusion of the big lie.

Critical 1961 seems to have teen the year when someone on the outside shouted "Jiggers!" and the scramble to get off the Diem bandwagon started. As late as November 2, 1959, and December 7, 1959, the New Leader was still carrying Wesley Fishel's breathless paeans of praise for Diem. Wolf Ladejinsky's glowing account of life under Diem appeared in the Reporter of December 24, 1959. A year later Ladejinsky got another propaganda piece in the New Leader. Then the liberals got the word Sol Levitas did a volte face in the New Leader and described the South Vietnamese government as "an autocratic, corrupt and ineffective regime." Labor's roving delegate, Irving Brown, in a confidential report to the AFL-CIO dated November 27, 1961, advised labor to drop Diem and support Saigon labor leader Tran quoc Buu.

Stan Karnow, who, as a -Time-Life man in Paris, refused to discuss Vietnam with Dr. Hoan in 1956, came out in the Reporter of January 19, 1961, with the most brutal indictment of Nhu's informers and Diem's government that America had seen to date. "Diem defeats his own best troops," he called it, but this time American conservatives rejected the story in toto on the assumption that if the Reporter printed it it could not be true.

It was as though Fate itself conspired to blind America by first saturating the country with lies which the public swallowed from 1954 to 1961 because they were palatable. Then, when the deceivers rushed to clear themselves of responsibility for the disaster, America rejected the truth because of who was writing it.

On November 24, 1956, Freda Utley's dithyrambic ecstasies on Diem and his family appeared in National Review, William Buckley's voice of the conservatives. What Miss Utley had done was assemble everything U. S. Information Service and Diem's propagandists gave her and called the result "The Amazing Mr. Diem." So loudly was USIS beating the drum for Diem in that part of the world, they intoxicated themselves. The wife of the USIS chief in Laos dropped her housework to write a Diem biography.

Gushed Freda in her National Review article: USIS was not denigrating Diem as the Office of War Information did Chiang. She neglected to observe that the boys who denigrated Chiang in 1944 were the same ones extolling Diem in 1956. “It has also to be noted on the credit side of American policy that U. S. Information Service expenditures in Vietnam, amount

ing to $750,000 a year, are used mainly to build up confidence in President Diem’s government,” said Freda. She called it “giving the government of South Vietnam the confidence engendered by having a big strong friend behind it.” Vietnamese time-biders considered it a serving of notice that Diem was there to stay, whether they wanted him or not. Nhu saw it as a green light.

Freda told how USIS helped the government “get information to the countryside by means of motion pictures carried and displayed by trucks; or of placards and posters which are read out to their neighbors by the literate people in every area. USIS also helps the Vietnamese Ministry of Information [run by the hated former Communist administrator of “justice.” Tran chanh Thanh] set up information halls in towns and villages; and to maintain boat units operating along the canals.”

No one appeared to reflect that had a nation with customs totally different from ours sent a team to America to meddle in our internal affairs by forcing on us a president they had selected, we would have been highly indignant. And had their team been as numerous, by percentage of population, as the scurrying propagandists we sent into South Vietnam, it would have amounted to an invasion. The fact that Freda’s thesis found universal acceptance in America should have aroused some doubts, but it did not. Liberals approved it because they were for USIS, which was part of the underwater section of the Diem machine iceberg. Conservatives swallowed it because it appeared in National Review.

So USIS, with conservative blessing, continued to act as a news agency and to issue press releases to the glory of Diem. Papers subsidized by USIS proceeded to print these releases on grounds that they were “selling America.” The egos of natives in countries where such effusions appeared were flattered because Americans, for all their shiny cars and jet airplanes, were obviously fools. The American public was told that everything was going fine, and everyone was happy.

Sometime after Joseph Buttinger's International Rescue Committee mission to South Vietnam in 1954, a subsidiary organization called American Friends of Vietnam made its appearance, thereby enabling Mr. Buttinger and Angier Biddle Duke to publish reports under one front and use another to substantiate and quote them. This AF of V, as we shall call it, was formed in December 1955, probably the day the men running the International Rescue Committee ordered the new stationery from the printer. At the head of it was Angier Bid

die Duke. Joseph Buttinger was vice chairman. In sum, it provided another identity for the men running the IRC. Leo Cherne, who was on the IRC letterhead as chairman, was a member of the executive committee of the AF of V and General John W. (Iron Mike) O'Daniel appeared as chairman.

The post-war Vietnam-American Friendship Association, set up as a front to support Ho chi Minh, disappeared, as we have mentioned, when American involvement in Korea drove our Vietminh supporters to cover. But this AF of V, which succeeded it in 1955, we find headed by the socialist Buttinger, who openly pronounced himself in favor of Ho chi Minh in his New Leader article of June 27, 1955.

Whether Mr. Buttinger's aim within the International Rescue Committee was to help foreign revolutionaries to escape from the police and rise to power, or to help recipients of his sympathy to get into America, is a question we will not go into here. Suffice it to say that wherever Communist-backed revolutionaries were in the field against our allies, the IRC was known and kept in mind as the rich American friend who could be counted upon for delivery in a pinch. Time magazine of Dec. 20, 1963, told its readers that Lee Harvey Oswald had written his mother from Russia, asking her to contact the International Rescue Committee about getting him home.

What motivated the men who got together in the spring of 1955 and sent a congratulatory telegram to Diem and in December organized the front that was to lull America while Southeast Asia crumbled? Buttinger's actions are understandable; he was a socialist. But what was Angier Biddle Duke doing in this galley? Duke had an inherited fortune. He was socially impeccable; all doors were open to him. What led him to become the front for an

aggregate of operators directed by and for the international left? In Duke's case there is unanimity of opinion, and the explanation for his action is the least complimentary of the lot. To a man, everyone questioned replies, "He is stupid."

One of the most prominent women financiers in America defended him, saying, "I know him well. He dines at my home; he couldn't do anything wrong. He is too stupid!" A well-known estate consultant, with offices at Rockefeller Center, said, "I've known him for years, but on anything but the weather I wouldn't take his judgment for a minute." On September 9, 1958, this writer asked Diem's public relations agent, Harold Oram, in the Overseas Press Club in New York, "What's the matter with Duke? He knows better than to write some of that tripe he publishes under his name!" The propa

gandist replied with a gesture of contempt and impatience, "Use your head. You know those fellows [in the AF of V] don't know what the score is; they are only set up there to sign papers!"

In Time magazine of February 10, 1961, we find Angier Biddle Duke, Kennedy's chief of protocol (!) whose name is on the invitation list of every hostess in Washington, presiding as honorary chairman at the head table of a testimonial dinner being given by the Committee of One Thousand for Congressman Adam Clayton Powell. What a commentary on American society.

On June 1, 1956, it was at a Washington banquet given by the American Friends of Vietnam that Duke presided. President Eisenhower was there. So were Assistant Secretary of State Walter D. Robertson and Senator John F. Kennedy. Morning papers in Saigon the next day carried their speeches, promising continued American aid and support for Ngo dinh Diem. It did not appear in any papers, but all over Saigon men were discussing in furtive whispers the arrest of two Dai Viet leaders, NgUyen van Ut and Nguyen tan Nua, pulled out of their beds in the middle of the night by Nhu's police and not heard of since. Nguyen ton Hoan wasted stamps on letters to Eisenhower, Robertson and Kennedy, but received no reply.

Over 250 "representatives of government, the armed services, the universities and national civic organizations" participated in the series of panel discussions sponsored by the AF of V that June 1, in Washington. Senator Kennedy expressed his pride at being a member of the AF of V.

Joseph Buttinger heaped scorn on Diem's critics and assured his listeners that the fight was already won. The sect leaders and the French colonels who assisted them in their sabotage, he said, are gone. Fred Bunting, Saigon chief of America's International Co-operation Administration operations, waxed enthusiastic. Said he, more than two-thirds of the ICA program funds in Vietnam were expended on internal security. The result: internal security was well on its way to solution. He did not mean the Communist threat; he was referring to Diem's anti-Communist personal enemies! "The country has been pacified and security has been established virtually everywhere," he boasted. "A National Police Academy has been established and intensive special training activities are under way." The 110-page booklet on this symposium which the AF of V put out in September of 1956 should be read for the light it throws on the depth of America's deception. Milton Sachs' speech is there. So is Leo Cherne's. General O'Daniel

promised victory in the field and showed his listeners a film. Joseph Buttinger, listed as a "political scientist and writer," was panel chairman for the discussion of Vietnam's "international position," a subject on which he had shown himself an authority as far as international socialist parties were concerned. It should be noted here that the Milton Sachs mentioned is the same Milton Sachs who in 1949 wrote Political Alignments of Vietnamese Nationalists, which appeared as report number 3708 of the Department of State Office of Intelligence and Research, and which was nothing more or less than a whitewash of the Vietminh.

The membership list of the American Friends of Vietnam, which Duke and Buttinger had drawn together, is also worth noting. Huynh sanh Thong, in his article in the Nation of February 18, 1961, said of it, "The American Friends of Vietnam was turned from the very beginning into a Diem propaganda outfit dominated by a relatively small but efficient group of activists on the executive committee." A study of the members that committee dominated provides an insight into the methods employed. The number of editors the committee directing the AF of V was able to rope in as "bad press insurance" was unbelievable. Malcolm Muir of Newsweek, Herbert Bayard Swope, Whitelaw Reid of the New York Herald Tribune, Quincy Howe, the news analyst; Barry Bingham of the Louisville Courier-Journal, William Randolph Hearst, Jr. and Max Lerner were all on the

roster. So was socialist Norman Thomas, Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Mrs. Averell Harriman and that joiner of liberal causes, Christopher Emmet.

Anyone scrutinizing the membership of this organization, separating the activists from the dupes brought in for their names, and studying the methods employed to prevent warning reports from reaching the public, must come to the conclusion that there were men in the AF of V who knew their business. How can one reconcile Norman Thomas' name on the front set up to boost Diem in 1956, and his equally active membership in 1948 on the front set up to boost Ho chi Minh? If Diem was such a valid anti-Communist, what was Norman Thomas, Ho's old partisan, doing on his side unless he was there as a favor to his fellow socialist, Joseph Buttinger? And if Thomas did not want to throw Vietnam to the Reds, what was he doing demonstrating against American military support in Vietnam, on moral and practical grounds, at a student rally in Washington in October, 1963? Why did Norman Thomas help thwart every Vietnamese attempt to get out from under

Ngo dinh Diem when the situation was not desperate, and then beat his breast and tell Washington students that "our support of Ngo dinh Diem's tyrannical and unpopular rule [which he and Buttinger had supported!] mocks our interest in freedom and our leadership of nations—"?

American Friends of Vietnam, powerful as it was with its senators and publishers, socialists and prominent citizens, was only a front body for the Diem cult. Let us take a look at how the lobby operated. Suppose an honest article on conditions in Vietnam were to get into print, such as Albert Colgrove's or Richard Starnes' reports in the Scripps-Howard press. Out of Harold Oram's public relations office would come a flow of instructions to AF of V members, associates in Saigon, stooges in America. The editor publishing the offending piece would be inundated with letters, many of them pre-written for the mailer to sign. Let the Providence Journal up in Rhode Island publish a letter critical of Diem, and in the length of time it would take a plane to reach Saigon and return, an angry retort would come, blasting the French colonialists, whitewashing Diem and ending, "I am not with any government agency, but with a private organization supported by the Overseas Chinese to combat Communist influence in the Pacific area." (Signed) Joan Thompson, or some other name.

What overseas Chinese organization? No one ever asked. Diem, you will remember had nationalized his country's Chinese, and they hated him accordingly except for Bernie Yoh, the Chinese employed by Diem to assure America that the Chinese loved Diem like a father. Formosa's public relations man, Marvin Liebman, in September 1958 described Diem's hatred of the Chinese as a bitter pathological thing.

It is unbelievable, the efficiency with which a handful of well-financed, well-directed men were able to recruit letter writers, letter signers, and acquiescent editors to undermine anyone who told America the truth.

Suppose an unfavorable inquiry arrived at the Vietnamese embassy in Washington, or on the side of Angier Biddle Duke's desk reserved for American Friends of Vietnam correspondence. It would be forwarded to Harold Oram. Oram would be deeply concerned. "I cannot believe, Madam, that this report is true. You may be assured that I shall look into it immediately.

"You asked 'just what is going on in South Vietnam' and referred to 'persistent' stories which indicate a 'criticism of the regime,' " runs a typical Oram reply. "I do believe your use of the term 'persistent' is a vast exaggeration. We read the

American and foreign press regularly and, aside from persistently unfriendly French journalists who are fundamentally engaged in licking their wounds, there is no sustained criticism anywhere in the world that would justify your comment."

The Oram statement was a lie. At that moment 2500 Vietnamese exiles were vainly watching the French press for a word of encouragement.

After a delay long enough for a letter to reach Saigon and the reply to get back to New York, Mr. Oram's expression of relief would reach the anxious American. Father Raymond de Jaegher in Saigon had assured him the story was false. A letter from a priest would usually clinch the discussion. With the copy of Father de Jaegher's letter Mr. Oram would enclose a report (undated) from the Times of Vietnam, praising President Diem for offering a home to Father de Jaegher when he had to leave Red China. So Father de Jaegher was whitewashing the man who supported him for just that purpose!

Each new name opens another trail for the researcher to investigate. Who was Father de Jaegher? “An excellent Belgian priest,” comes the answer from his high Catholic sources. “An honorable man. He would lay down his life for Diem tomorrow.” Another priest averred, “Father de Jaegher was not fighting Communism. He was playing politics, fighting for the right of his man to lead the anti-Communist fight. And he would turn over to Nhu’s police any Vietnamese who came to him with information critical of his hero, or anyone who warned that a growing number of Vietnamese saw Ho chi Minh as a liberator from Diem and his brother.”

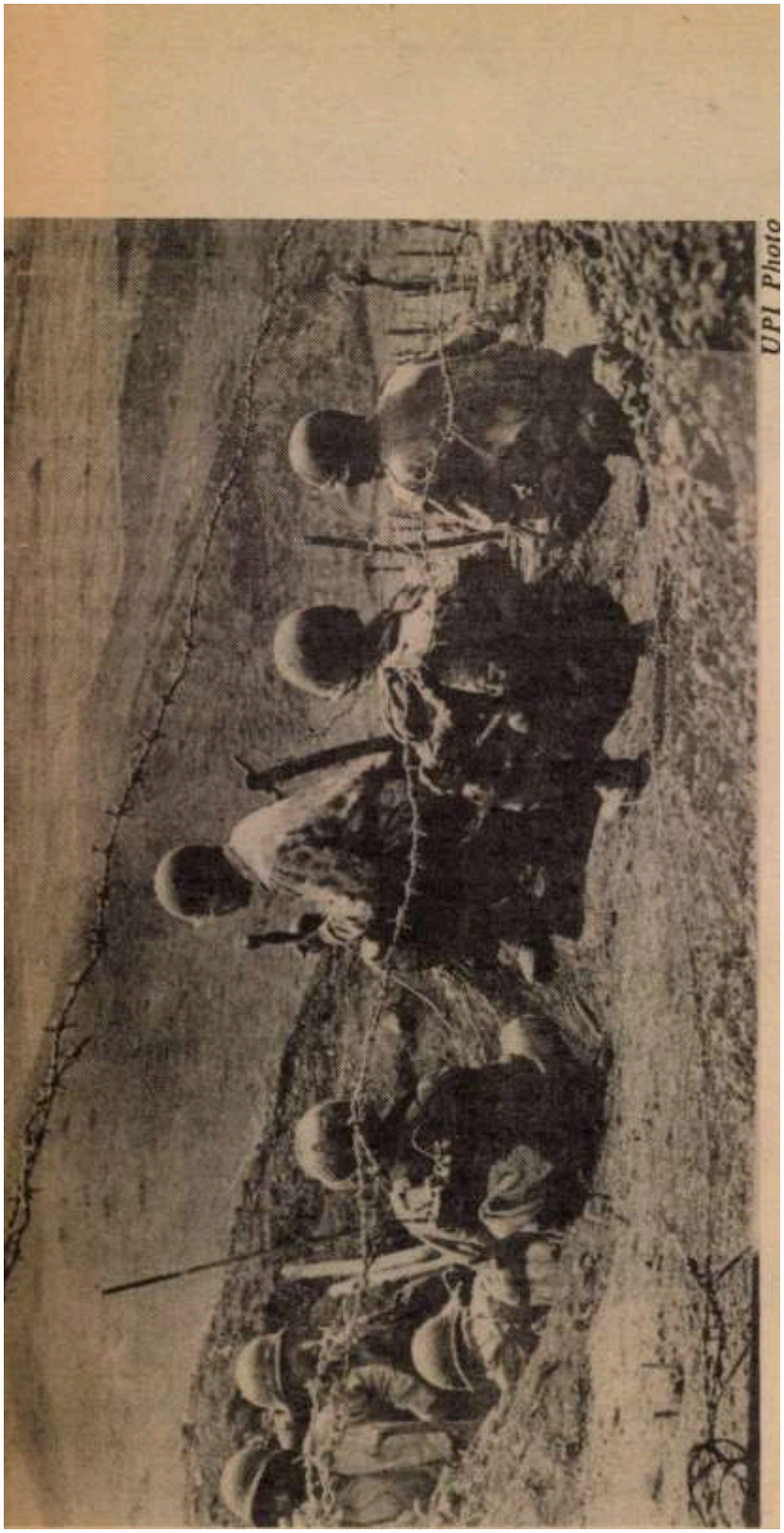
What about the Times of Vietnam, quoted by Harold Oram and used to praise Father de Jaegher? The answer: a Diem propaganda sheet published by American Gene Gregory and his wife Anne. Gregory went to Saigon in 1955 on a Ford Foundation grant to write a thesis on village life in South Vietnam. Instead, he started publishing Times of Vietnam. The recurrent story that Gregory changed his ten-thousanddollar grant from Ford Foundation on the Saigon black market to launch his paper may or may not be true; in either case neither the rumor nor the paper helped America. It is possible that Gregory may be the first American to have enriched himself in Vietnam at the expense of the American taxpayer. A paper flattering the insatiable vanity of Diem could not fail financially, with or without Vu van Thai, the American aid administrator getting a share of the handout. (According to Vietnam’s 1957 budget debate, Thai’s office paid



UP1 Photo

President Ngo dinh Diem and Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge walk in false amiability. Their thoughts are anybody's guess. In 1953 and 1954 Diem's labor leader brother, Nhu, had eased his men into the International Labor Organization to muster world wide support for Diem's American-imposed rise to power. In the ILO was George Lodge, the ambassador's

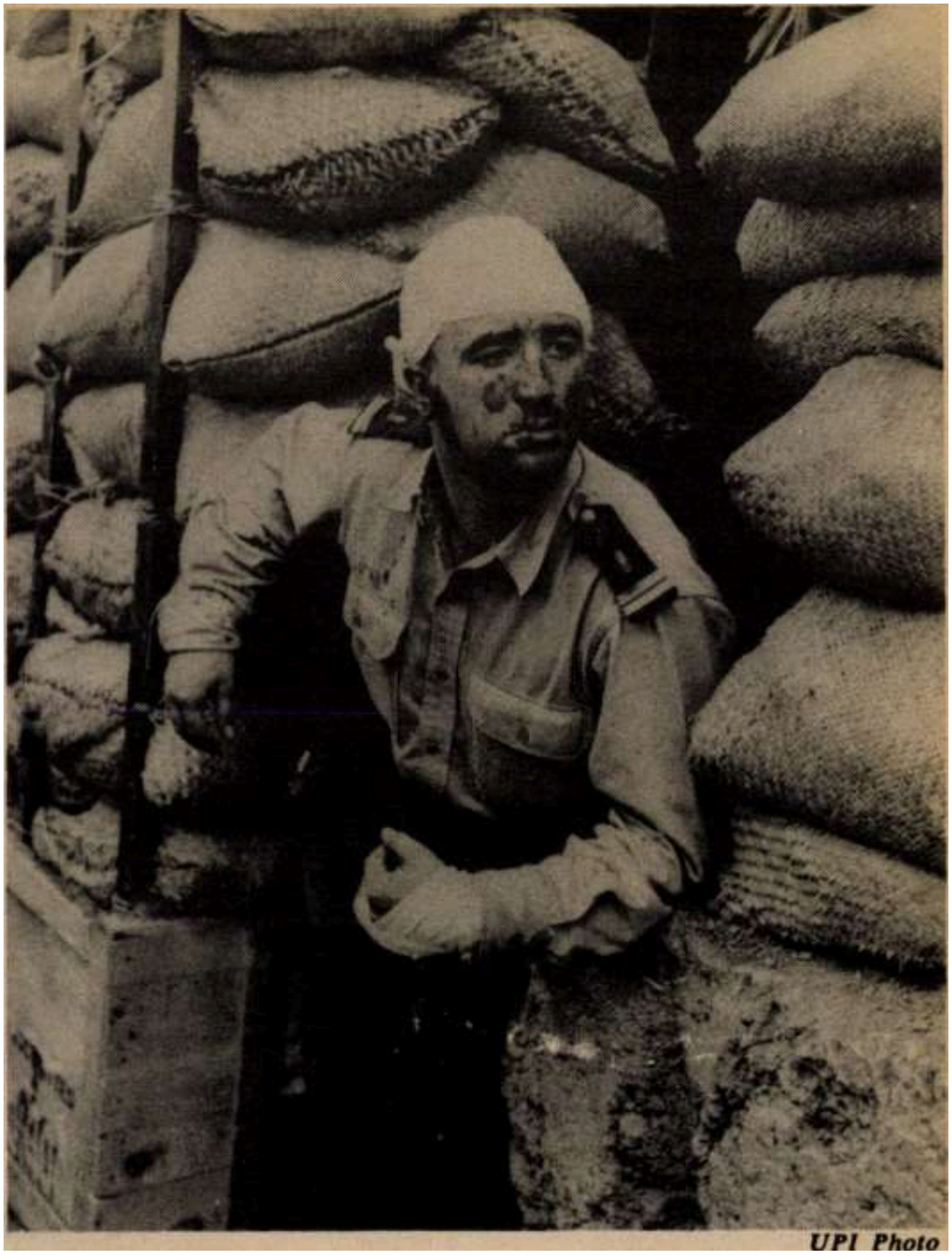
son. At that time the elder Lodge was American ambassador to the United Nations, close to the ear of John Foster Dulles and Milton Eisenhower. What Diem is probably asking himself is, “Did the Kennedy crowd say to this man, ‘You and your son helped get us into this mess; saddled with this family; now you go out there and get us out’?”



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A grim-faced lieutenant of the Foreign Legion peers out of a shelter in beleaguered Dien Bien Phu. The public in the West was never told that the Communist army of Ho chi Minh was virtually destroyed at Dien Bien Phu while winning its Pyrrhic victory.



With a pensive expression, Madame Ngo dinh Nhu faces an audience at Fordham University during her visit to New York City in mid-October, 1963. The beautiful and avaricious sister-in-law of President Diem became the “first lady” of Vietnam. She controlled business deals and secret funds with a women’s para-military organization of her own, mobilized to provide accurate political intelligence for their leader.



Ngo dinh Nhu was 43 when his brother Diem rose to power. Nhu had been a labor leader living in his fly-specked office in Saigon. To him went control of the police and secret police. Known as “advisor” to the president, Nhu actually held the reins of power during the later days of the Diem regime.



UPl Photo

Former Ambassador to the U.S. Tran van Chuong, father of Madame Nhu, tells a press conference in Boston, November 1, 1963, that the overthrow of the Diem government came as no surprise to him. A lawyer in private life, Chuong became in the Diem period ambassador to Washington, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil with control of embassy funds for these countries.



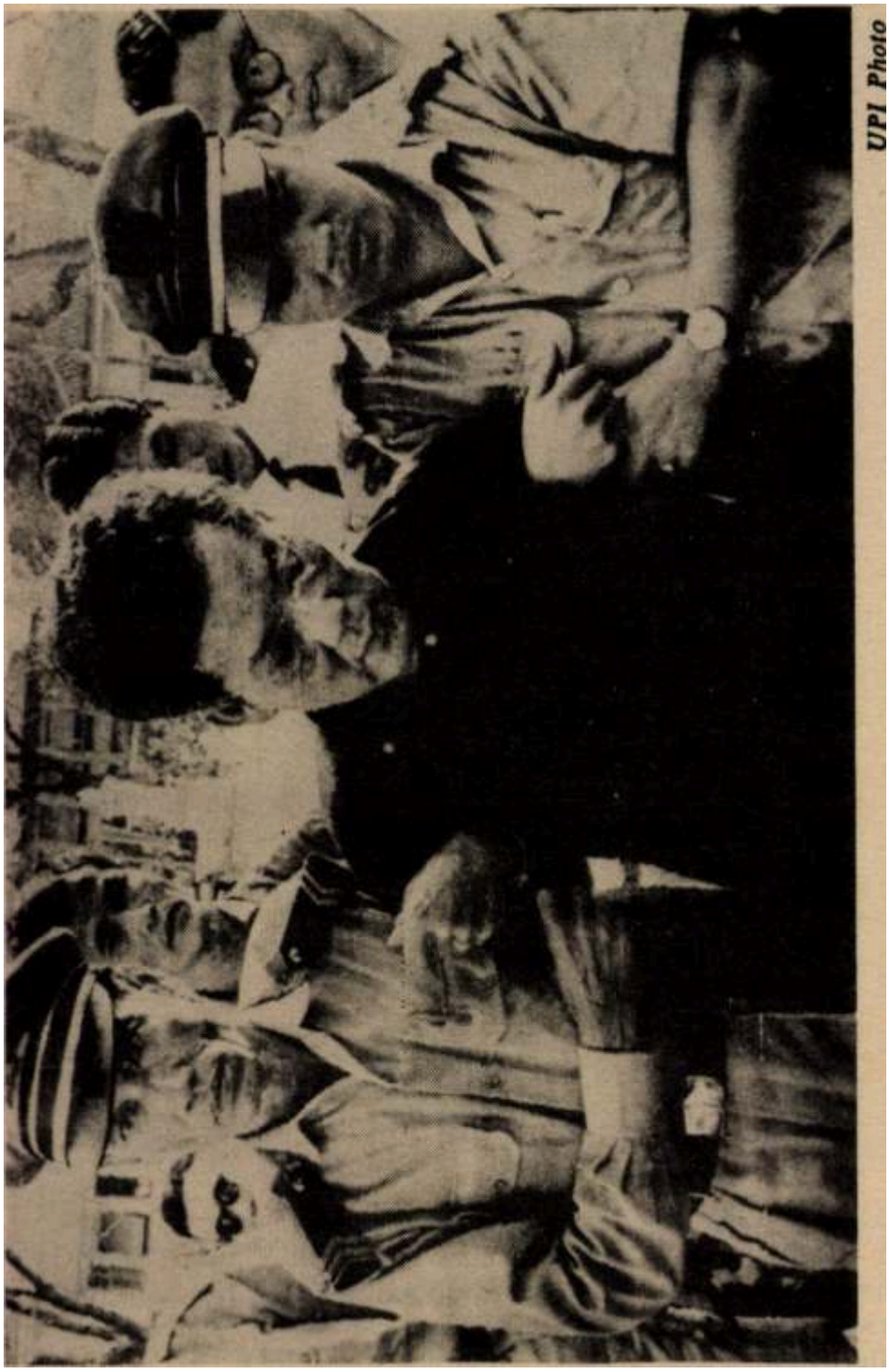
UP1 Photo

Bearing a striking resemblance to her mother, attractive Ngo dinh Le Thuy, 18, daughter of Madame Nhu, wears the uniform of the Republican Girls, her mother's para-military group.

UPI Photo

Archbishop of Hue, Msgr. Ngo dinh Thuc, an older brother of Ngo dinh Diem, shares a laugh with New York newsmen in September, 1963. From his home surrounded by anti-aircraft batteries, Thuc controlled the churches in Vietnam, vast landholdings, business enterprises and a profitable monopoly on schoolbook purchases for the country.

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Ngo dinh Can, younger brother of the slain Ngo dinh Diem, is escorted by guards into court for the opening of his trial on charges of criminal acts during his administration under his brother's regime. Can controlled the traffic in rice, and the northern part of Vietnam was his fief.

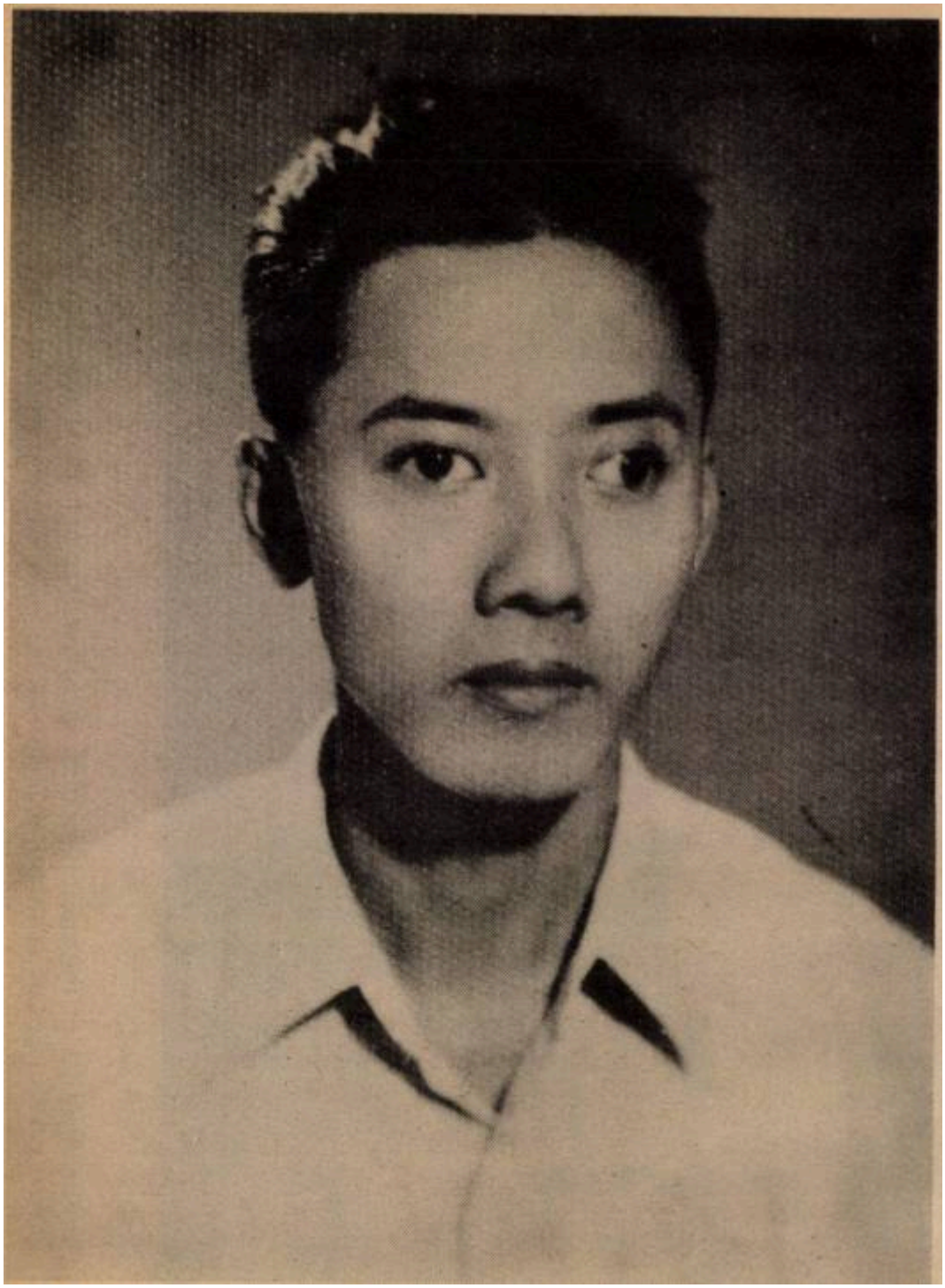
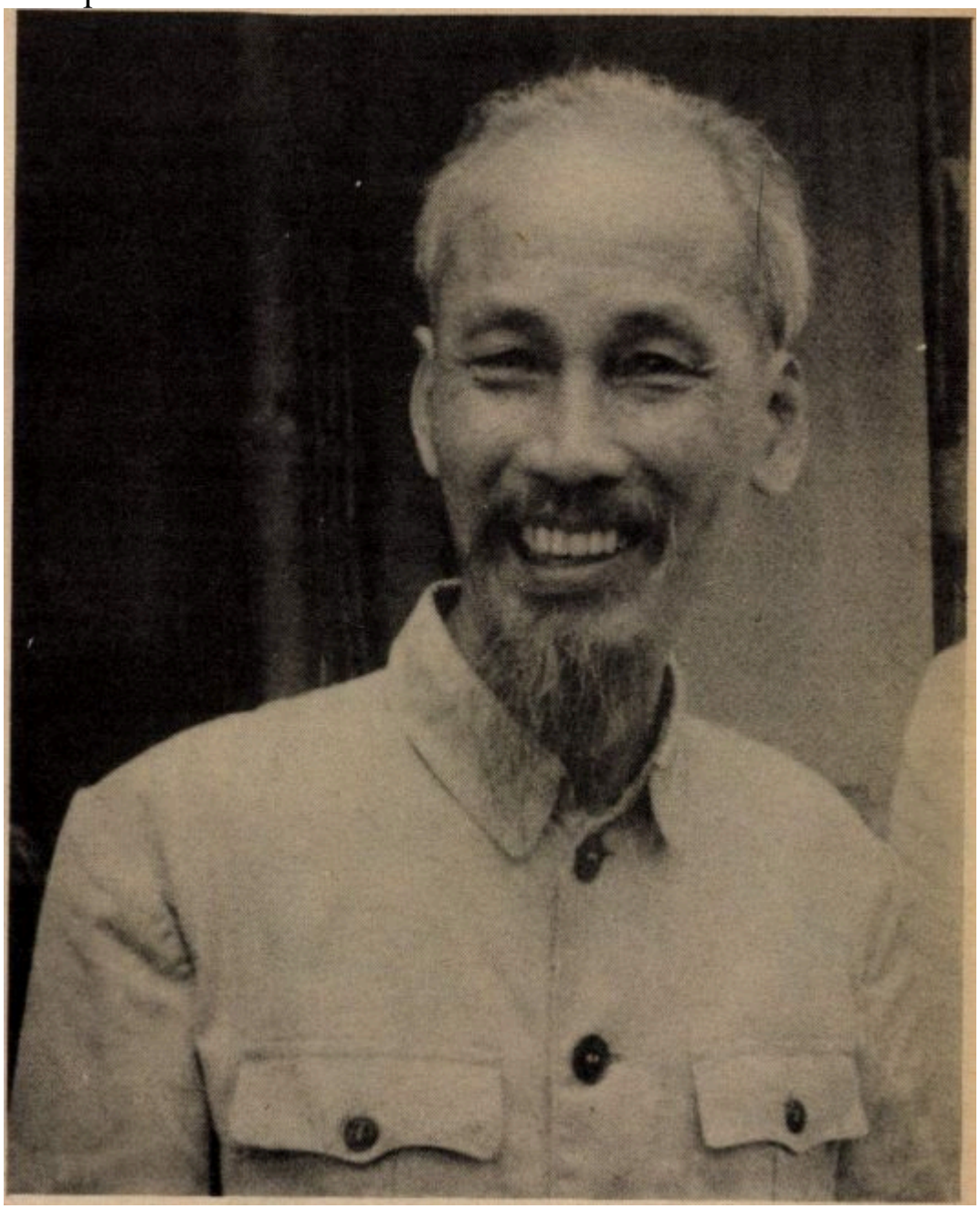


Photo of Albert Pham ngoc Thao as he looked when chief of Communist Ho chi Minh's intelligence service in Cochin China. Under Diem he became head of Nhu's secret police and had his hand in The American aid till. Diem made him governor of a province and Joe Alsop made him a hero. All night on October 31, 1963, he sat at a microphone

broadcasting attacks against his former masters, Diem and Nhu. Made press attache in the Vietnam embassy in Washington, he flew home on December 26, 1964, surfaced on February 19, 1965, in a desperate attempt to seize power, then went underground to await a more propitious moment when the attempt failed.



UPI Photo

Ho chi Minh, last of the old time Qommunist revolutionaries and president of the People's Republic of North Vietnam. As far back as 1918

Ho chi Minh wrote an incendiary article on the plight of the American Negro in Harlem, in which he foresaw the possibility of using the American Negro as a tool for revolution.



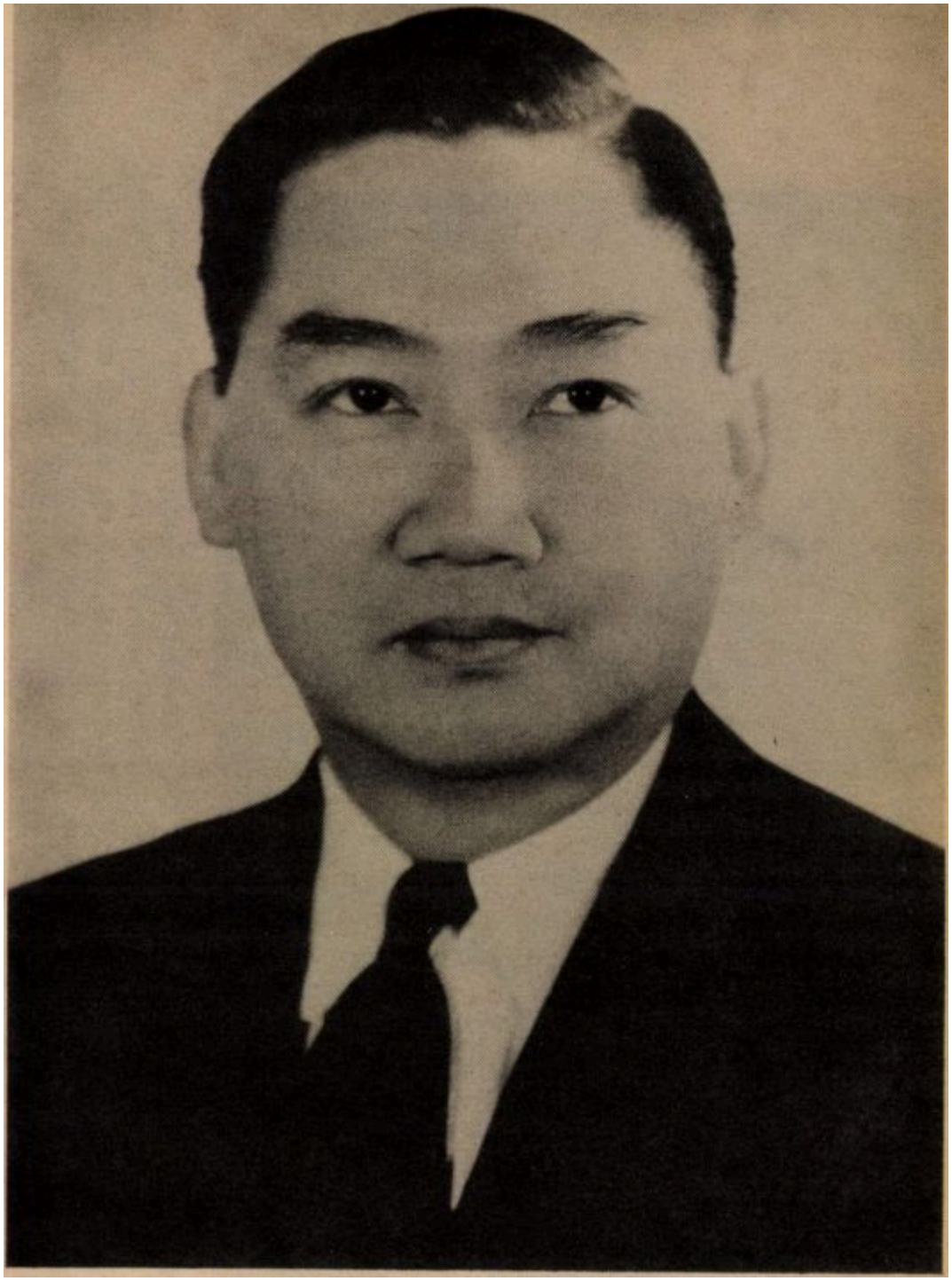
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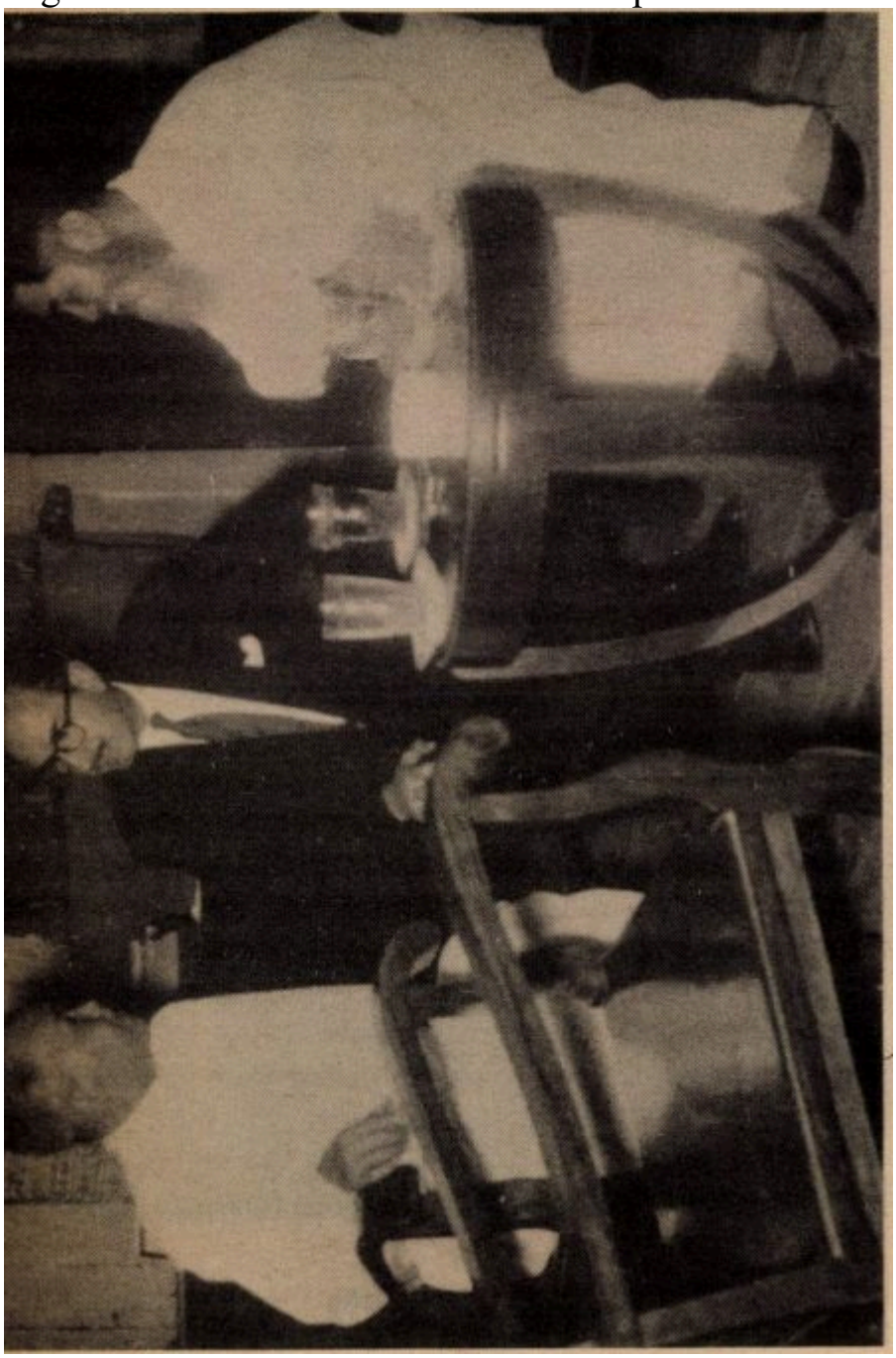
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Nguyen ton Hoan: Catholic, veteran leader of the Dai Viet party, the largest and best established nationalist, anti-Communist party in South Vietnam. After Diem's fall Hoan was attacked by Communist Hanoi as the man America would logically chose to replace Diem, while misinformed conservatives and advocates of no-winism attacked him in Washington. Hoan was the one leader the Communists feared. After a brief period as

vice-premier under General Nguyen Khanh, Hoan was exiled by Khanh on September 3, 1964. His exile removed determined leadership and brought a negotiated surrender in Vietnam one step nearer.



His Holiness, Pham cong Tac, Pope of the Cao Dai sect (left), Hilaire du Berrier, and the Bao Dao (Defender of the Faith), number two of the Cao Dai sect. The Diem government, never anxious to take on the Communists, did manage to subjugate all anti-Communist sects and factions. This

photograph was taken in Cambodia where the Cao Dai leaders resided in exile.

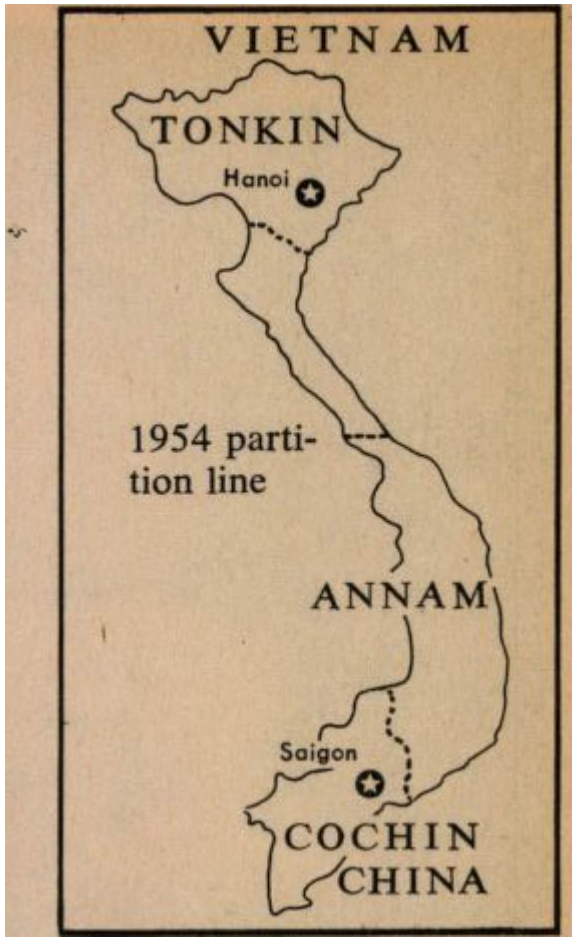


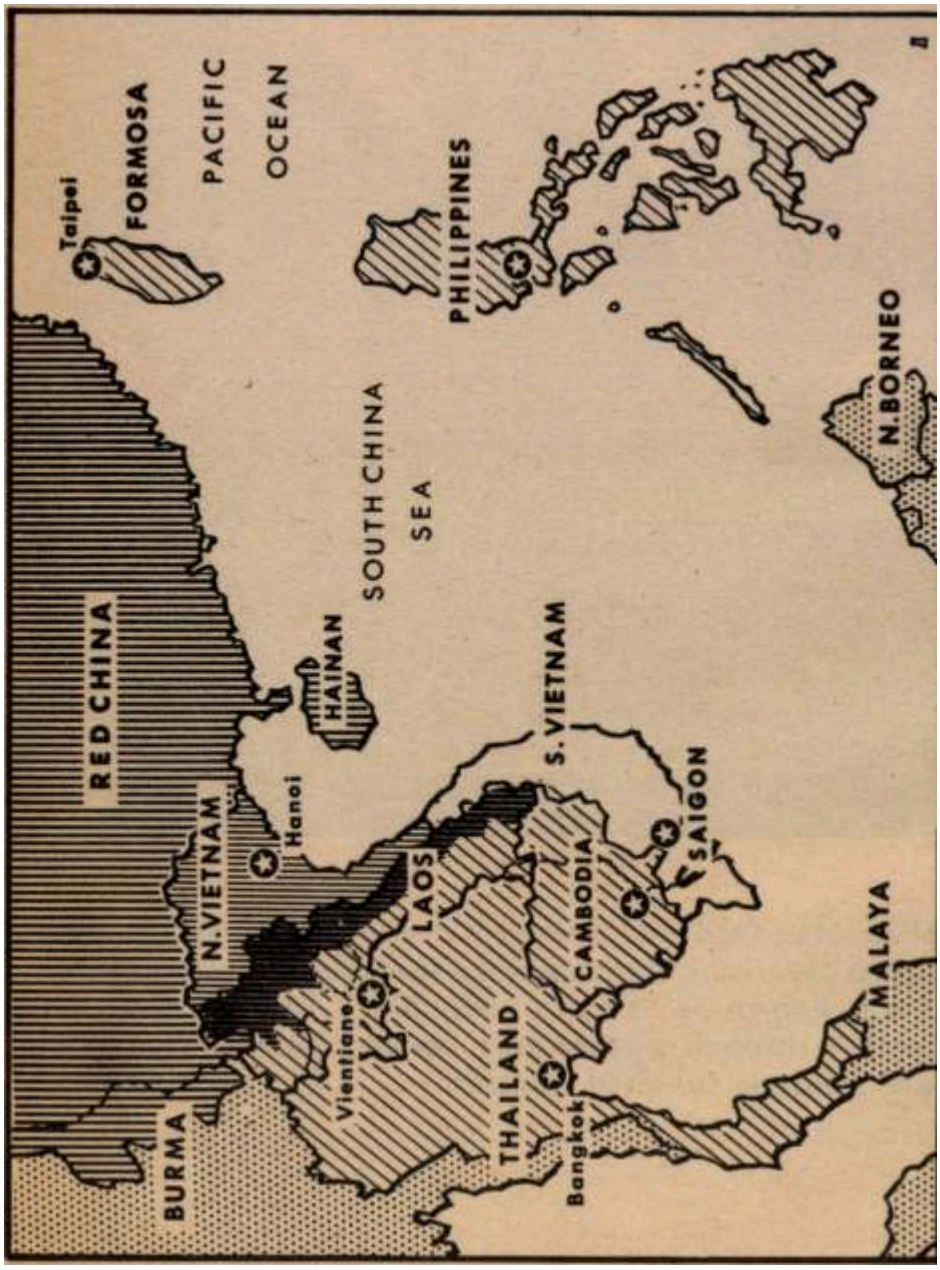
UPI Photo

Senator Mike Mansfield and President Lyndon B. Johnson might well have been discussing Vietnam when this photograph was taken. Mansfield was known as “Diem’s godfather.” The American left led this country

through a seven-year honeymoon with the Diem regime until someone hollered “Jiggers.”




VIETNAM
TONKIN
Hanoi
1954 partition line
ANNAM
Saigon
COCHIN CHINA



The three parts of long, thin

At the hub of Southeast Asia—South Vietnam, America's showcase for democ- Vietnam: to the north, Tonkin;

racy, which was never really America's, but the personal experiment theater for in the middle, Annam; to the

the ideas of America's well-entrenched liberal clique. south, Cochin China.

seventeen million piastres in that year, (a little less than half a million dollars, to the Times of Vietnam.)

The paper was not a giveaway sheet. It carried heavy advertising, and the only high-salaried person on it was Gregory. For Diem and Nhu it provided a quotable English-language press, bearing their account of their affairs for USIS to communicate to Bangkok, Vientiane, Pnom Penh, Washington and elsewhere. Had an infiltrator been directing this operation for the Communists, with the objective of making Americans look foolish, or dishonest, or both, he could not have done a better job.

As Diem's leading English-language sycophant in the country, Mr. Gregory's influence was considerable, whether or not Vu van Thai was his partner, as rumored. Consequently there was every possibility that he might be tempted to influence deals for business men negotiating contracts. Eventually Mr. Gregory opened his own import-export business, the Vietnam Development Company, on the side. The only irregularity the International Co-operation Agency was ever induced to admit and investigate in Saigon was the one in which Mr. Gregory was the complainant. ICA chief Leland Barrows acknowledged receiving a note from Gregory dated August 14, 1958, disclosing the "curious," as Mr. Barrows described it, fact that Motorola Communications and Electronics, Inc. was awarded a $47,000 contract for police radios, though its bid was sixty percent higher than Gregory's. Stepping on the toes of Gene Gregory was a grave tactical error on the part of Motorola.

What a mess! Here we had Michigan State University, hired by ICA to make a study and draw up specifications for a project on which Motorola was going to make a bid. How did they do it? By copying a Motorola catalogue. Naturally Motorola got the contract. But had not Diem's own propagandist been the bidder they were freezing out, this deal, like so many others, could have gotten by with murder, as Jim G. Lucas pointed out in his New York World-Telegram report of November 16, 1959.

How did Michigan State University happen to come into the operations of Gene Gregory, the man Graham Greene is said to have had in mind when he created his central character in The Quiet American? What was Michigan State doing, writing specifications for the International Co-operation Agency in South Vietnam? It would take volumes to provide the answer. If all the so-called "scholarly" books published by Michigan State during the honeymoon years with Ngo dinh Diem were spread out before an investigating committee, and the

source of the money that produced them probed, it would shake the educational system of Michigan if not all America.

The pool of professors acting as propagandists while employed as educators, quoting each other as "authorities," according diplomas to students who parrotted their theme, which subsequent history has proved to be false, and flunking those who dug for the truth, should be exposed. While Michigan State's Vietnam Project was in operation, we find its president John Hanna, acting as advisor to President Eisenhower as chairman of the Civil Rights Commission.

Not content with flooding universities with books glorifying a man whom the authors and publishers of those books were later to repudiate, Michigan State in July of 1959 turned out a book for $1.25 on What to Read on South Vietnam to recommend works written by the propaganda pool and rule out anything written by anyone else. This book was distributed by the Institute of Pacific Relations. Huynh sanh Thong, at Yale, told this author in 1958 of hearing Diem's public relations man, Harold Oram, ask Milton Sachs to do a "scholarly report" on Diem, adding, "I'll pay you for it."

Early one morning in the winter of 1956, French police swooped down on the Quai aux Fleurs apartment of a man named Daniel Guerin who was implicated with a Communist ring helping the Algerian rebels. Simultaneously they raided Guerin's office in the Communist-infiltrated France Observateur. In the apartment they found Guerin's friend Milton Sachs. Nguyen ton Hoan, the exiled Dai Viet leader told this author that while he was trying to contact Mr. Sachs in Paris he walked in on the middle of the raid.

Certainly the actors chosen by the faceless casting director forming America's South Vietnam troupe were perfect for their roles. Angier Biddle Duke was the star who provided social impeccability and name value at the head of press communiques and letters. Leo Cherne, with his frequent appearances on chatty New York radio programs and his Research Institute of America identity and newsletter, had another following. It was as executive director of the Research Institute of America that Leo Cherne advised American businessmen, on February 28, 1958, to plunge into South Vietnam, for Diem would back their investments. Labor leaders, the New Leader and the socialist left were in Buttinger's pocket. Father de Jaegher's word was final in the minds of many Catholics who saw him as a Saigon

priest rather than Diem's pensioner running a magazine and press bureau for his patron. The National Catholic Welfare Conference reported on April 8, 1957,

that the last Catholic paper in Vietnam had been closed and its editor-priest, Father Vu minh Trac, sent to prison for nine months for "defaming the state." He had prayed, editorially, that "the Almighty keep the President always in good health and enlightened to regain the confidence of the beginning." This was not printed in America.

Bernie Yoh was the stooge to fly back and forth between Washington and Saigon; to Saigon so he could say he had been there, then back to America to tell editors, women's clubs and congressmen, "Don't believe what you hear. I have just come from Vietnam. I have been in the jungles with the guerrillas, killing Communists, and we are winning. You are not going to desert Vietnam as you did my country, are you?"

Psychologically the choosing of a Chinese to touch America's guilty conscience was brilliant. That Diem hated the Chinese and they hated him was immaterial. Depending on the gullibility of the listener, Yoh was Diem's advisor, a guerrilla expert, a Chinese intelligence officer, and on occasion a Chinese Nationalist general.

Wesley Fishel and Milton Sachs provided the "scholarly articles" and letters from professors to refute any unfavorable reports. When Tran van Tung fled from Vietnam and organized an opposition party in exile, the New York Times of August 28, 1955, gave Christopher Emmet more than a column in which to axe him. An introductory paragraph in italics introduced Mr. Emmet as a "member of the Executive Committee of the International Rescue Committee, which is assisting intellectuals who have escaped from North to South Vietnam." How were they assisting these intellectuals, by helping them into America to lobby for their man? And what was Trung if not an intellectual refugee?

Diem's years of "politicking" in America were never criticized by Emmet and the interlocking organizations working America; but, with all the guilelessness in the world Emmet observed that Mr. Tung did not explain why his letter in the Times of August 14 emanated from Paris and not from Saigon. The answer was that one did not write such letters from Saigon in 1955 with impunity.

There was no level of society or field of endeavor unworked by Diem's American lobby. When the word of an "authority" was needed to impress

the person being duped, a letter signed by Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel appeared in the mail, and a flood of letters would be mobilized if the offending editor did not give it attention. "Permit an old soldier and Chief of the U. S. Military Advisory Mission in Saigon during 1954

and 1955 to express his appreciation of one of the finest pieces of fiction I have ever run across under the guise of so-called political verity," was the typical opening of an O'Daniel offensive against an honest report. By the time history proved the troublesome writer right and O'Daniel wrong, it was too late.

On occasion the propaganda drive took on the form of a swindle. Americans clamored to know what was going on in South Vietnam, so, in October 1956 we find the citizens of Los Angeles and surrounding communities buying tickets to hear an "authority" deliver a lecture in the Ebel Club. The lecturer they were paying to hear was Diem's propagandist, General O'Daniel.

General Navarre's book, The Agony of Indo-China, with its lessons and indictment of General O'Daniel's sabotage of the French war effort, should be required reading for Americans. America's risk was limited to materiel, said Navarre; Navarre was doing the fighting. O'Daniel made several trips to Indochina, charged with integrating American aid and French strategic needs. This sufficed to make him the Pentagon's Indochina expert. His ideas on how a war should be fought were limited to what he called the "lessons of Korea." Navarre said they were unsound. The terrain, the form of warfare and the men were different. There was no front in Indochina with its jungles and marshes. In Korea the rear was more or less secure and the entire nation was on a war footing. Vietnam could not be put on a war footing with an American general constantly repeating, "Do not lift a finger till they give you complete independence."

When O'Daniel alone could not impose his views on Navarre, he started inflating the size of his American mission. With its weight behind him he tried to dictate strategy and policy by controlling the use of the American materiel furnished, wrote General Navarre. When hope of victory depended on Navarre's bringing the Vietnamese into their war, O'Daniel continued to play politics in admonishing, "Do nothing unless they [the French] give you

complete independence. There is no reason why you should not have the handling of American aid yourselves." The last was particularly attractive.

That the South Koreans were never given independent command of their army till after their war was over was never considered. Navarre lamented that with each increase of autonomy he gave the Indochinese states to buy their co-operation, O'Daniel raised the price. With each grant of more freedom of command, the military quality which Navarre was

trying to raise diminished. Each new liberty of action was used by the people most concerned in the outcome of the struggle to elect to do nothing. In the end Navarre reflected that a firm Franco-American front could have inspired a common offensive. O'Daniel's playing of the Vietnamese against the French prevented him from achieving it.

Georges Chafford, a recognized authority on Southeast Asia, told in Le Monde, of January 5, 1957, how General O'Daniel presided over training conferences for Vietnamese officers. When his views were opposed as impractical, "Iron Mike" banged his fist on the table and shouted, "Who is paying for this?" After a short recess the Vietnamese officers would return to the meeting and announce their submission.

June 1958 saw the appearance of General O'Daniel's "Confidential Intelligence Report on Vietnam" circulated by Diem's humming lobby. Its theme: Don't believe anything bad you hear against Diem; they are Communist lies. It is the duty of every patriotic American to encourage private investment in South Vietnam and see that American aid is maintained at the highest possible level.

Wherever reports appeared on Diem's police state, a regimented cascade of letters demanded that General O'Daniel, the Pentagon's authority, be permitted to write a reply. Ready to do anything to get the hornets away from his head, the harassed editor would comply as did the editor of American Mercury. General O'Daniel's "refutation," when it came, ignored every offending statement he was supposed to correct and repeated the threadbare litany, false from the start, of Diem's pretended miracles: "Out of post-Geneva chaos he [Diem] created public order and political stability. Out of an inherited administrative chaos he created a government functioning smoothly over the whole of South Vietnam. Out of a post-Dien Bien Phu military chaos he has created from a strife-torn and

demoralized military nonentity a well-trained and well-equipped national army. His administration has settled almost a million refugees. His administration shored up a tottering economy, overcame inflation and removed the vicious forces of racketeering and vice. His administration abolished a moribund and hated monarchy and replaced it with a government that has successfully solved the short-range problems with which the country has been beset."

Not a line of the theme was valid when it was written. A surface appearance of public order had been created by terror and secret police. There was no political stability nor smoothly functioning government, as succeeding events were to attest.

American dollars created the spit-and-polish army O'Daniel vaunted, and threw out the despised French colonialist commando school with its jungle warfare instruction. The million refugees were told by their priests to go south, the American navy and French air force transported them, and American aid maintained them in attractive "Potemkin" villages thereafter for congressional junkets to admire as one of Diem's miracles. With the entire Vienamese economy dependent on American aid, to tell us Diem shored it up is to insult our intelligence. As for Diem's government and the "moribund monarchy" it replaced, intelligent Americans will wish with all their hearts someday that they had that "moribund monarchy" back. Aside from it there was no unifying force or sense of nationality in Vietnam.

How did O'Daniel and the rest of them put it over? The answer is simple: Fear-inspiring police concealed the foment in Saigon. Suppression of the truth and propagation of the false picture blanketed America. Our State Department cooperated by hounding like a criminal any American who bucked the artificially created tide. Like a heavy curtain, an ocean of newsprint from the immense machine headed by a socialite, directed by left-wing socialists, and financed by deceived Americans, shut off every glimmer of what was really happening.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE "SHOWCASE FOR DEMOCRACY" AT WORK

While Harold Oram, Angier Biddle Duke, Joseph Buttinger and Michigan State University spread a screen between Vietnam and the American people, a fake front which depicted our new democracy-blessed proteges as living in a Watteau garden, things were far from pleasant for those not lucky enough to be at the top.

Archbishop Thuc, the oldest brother of the Ngo dinh family and hence by mandarin custom its chief, recovered from his disappointment at not being given the Saigon diocese and plunged into business with gusto, buying apartment houses, stores, rubber estates and timber concessions. When Thuc set his eyes on a piece of real estate, other bidders prudently dropped out. Importation of schoolbooks was in his hands, which gave him the rights of a censor, and Michigan State University a market.

Soldiers, instead of building defenses, were put to work cutting wood for brother Thuc to sell. Army trucks and labor were requisitioned to build buildings for him. A Saigon merchant observed, "As a brother of Diem, his [Thuc's] requests for donations read like tax notices." The Vatican was aware of the harm Thuc was doing, and of the trouble that mobilizing Catholic refugees could cause—mobilization that was done on grounds that the Catholics "are more trustworthy, more likely to be loyal to the regime."

In central Vietnam brother Ngo dinh Can lived like a feudal warlord, spreading terror with mass arrests and summary executions, shaking down businessmen for his political party and requesting officers, desirous of promotion to hold out monthly "donations" from their men. When Can was about to face a firing squad, Time of May 1, 1964, described him as a "rural Rasputin in high-collar Mandarin robes who wenched and swindled lustily." However, during the years when Central Vietnam was groaning and Can was filling the dungeons and mass graves discovered after his brother's fall, Time hewed to the State Department-Joe Alsop line that any complaint was

only another venting of "the dog-in-the-manger" attitude of the French.

Fancy slogans and holier-than-thou pronouncements introduced Diem's campaign against black-marketing, making it a crime punishable by death. One of the most flourishing black markets was rice. Distribution had broken down, war had disrupted the planting, and America was shipping rice to the country that had been Southeast Asia's granary, trying to hold down the price. An over-zealous official uncovered a large scale traffic in rice smuggling into Communist North Vietnam. There were arrests and a loud outcry in the press—then an attempt to quash the whole campaign. The smuggling ring was operating under orders of Diem's brother Can. The affair could not be hushed up completely, so a court went through the motions of a trial. One man was executed, to satisfy an irate public, furious

over having been forced to pay high prices for rice when it was the diverting of the supply to the Reds which caused the shortage. The rest of those arrested were given stiff sentences, but Can was never touched.

While Can sold the opium in Hue that his brother's police confiscated in Saigon, brother Luyen's preserve was in Europe. Remember, a Vietnamese with access to dollars could buy seventy-five piastres on the black market for one dollar, and if he were on the inside he could buy dollars at thirty-five piastres. Luyen went into a huddle with a group of men who had incorporated themselves into a firm called COFRAMET. COFRAMET was at 69 Boulevard Haussman, and with Luyen as the Vietnamese partner they formed another corporation called COVENTER, located at 163 Boulevard Ham Nghi, in Saigon. The idea was to use the dormant funds, inside information, and exchange facilities Luyen had at his disposal and make a clean-up. All of the men in Luyen's COVENTER office in Saigon were relatives or henchmen of the Ngo dinhs, who had other relatives and henchmen in the National Bank of Vietnam and the bureau of exchange. It was a natural.

The COFRAMET crowd in Paris put up five million francs as capital. Luyen listed his Saigon capitalization at one million piastres and made an immediate profit on the exchange. Two Frenchmen named Sauzun and Carsanti were dispatched to Saigon to represent COFRAMET on the spot, and some of the weirdest financial transactions that ever graced a swindle novel were on their way.

William Hunt, an American operator who had made a fortune in China, was digging into the Southeast Asian field at the time, and among Hunt's items were banknotes. The British

firm of De La Rue had previously enjoyed a banknote monopoly in Thailand until Hunt's man, an American named Weber, made the mistake of thinking he could squeeze out a firm of De La Rue's importance without reckoning with British Intelligence.

Weber took the Thai finance minister and governor of the Bank of Thailand, Nai Chote Gunakasem, and the finance minister's secretary, Dr. Sudchit, in with him, and the three proceeded to throw out De La Rue's banknotes and introduce Hunt's. The inevitable happened: British Intelligence carefully gathered evidence and De La Rue blew the combine sky-high in 1959. There were many arrests, a suicide, and a crisis for the

Sarit Thanarat cabinet itself. Naturally, the American press was discreet when the Thailand scandal broke.

Back in 1955 Weber and Hunt were still going strong in Bangkok when they began eyeing the Saigon market. Weber suggested to Sauzun and Carsanti that if they would let him in on their operation they would all have a foot in Bangkok. The time had come for Vietnam to have new banknotes. And what an operation it was! How many times old notes were exchanged for new ones at a bank window, and then carried out the back door to circle the building and come in the front (the American taxpayer being told all the while he was "generating currency"), will never be known. A voucher explained the disappearance of one lot of $400 million in local currency with the laconic statement, "Burned by fire."

Weber and Hunt operations followed the customary freezeout pattern, and the next move was to eliminate the Frenchmen. For months a hocus-pocus of bank deposits followed, as COFRAMET maneuvered to get its five million francs back and another deposit in Switzerland. In the end Luyen and Weber held the field, but all was not rosey for long. Luyen, trading on his position as Diem's brother, wanted too big a cut. Weber and Hunt figured the lion's share rightfully belonged to them because the money was American, so they proceeded to buy out a man named Linh, whom Luyen had set up as COVENTER's director. When Luyen began to get tough they leaked the whole deal to Madame Chuong, Madame Nhu's mother.

An inter-family struggle was going on between Madame Chuong and Luyen at the time. Luyen was trying to get his hands on the sixteen million francs a month allotted Madame Chuong's friend, Pham duy Khiem, for maintenance of Luyen's embassy and his own in Paris. With the details of his flyer in international corporations in Madame Chuong's hands,

Luyen knew he was beaten. Madame Nhu took over COVENTER and Luyen had no doubts that his days as ambassador-at-large were numbered. He scurried to clean up all he could before the axe fell. There were other irons in the fire, and what a buying spree he had.

Since he did not trust his office force, orders went out to buy three tape recorders and install them in the office of the ambassador-at-large on a Saturday, while the office force was away, and in such a manner that

conversations in every room and on every telephone could be recorded by manipulating a series of controls under Luyen's desk. They were not cheap recorders either. Everything purchased was of the best, with an eye to providing the incumbent with as many valuable, convertible assets as possible before he left.

Like youngsters enjoying a new gadget, Luyen and his trusted lieutenant accumulated a pyramid of tapes bearing every imaginable sort of recorded drivel within a week. Watching the pile of tapes mount, a tolerant confidant philosophized on the way American-aid-supported embassies are run, with the observation, "And so prosperity descended on the little tape shop on Avenue Friedland, like golden sunset over the turquoise dome of Samarkand's Shah-i-Zinda."

There was no big circulation paper or magazine in America willing to report it, but the divergence of America's interests and Diem's had already become evident. The Binh Xuyen and the armies of the two sects that had been driven underground formed a new coalition called the Cao-Tien-Hoa-Binh, under General Bay Mon, Le van Vien's old chief of staff. America was told nothing of this, but instead was led to believe that only Communist opposition remained. Washington wanted Diem to get on with his job of cleaning out the Communists, so that we could cut our aid and bring home our advisors.

While this had priority in Washington, the top priority of the Ngo dinhs was survival in power. American advisors were regarded as a necessary evil, to be borne in order to get the money that went with them but not necessarily heeded. If the money were cut off there would be no stick to hold over the head of the army. In other words, a Communist threat must be fostered, protected and preserved, to keep America in the game, without which Diem and Nhu would be lost. The Ngo dinhs intended to remain in power forever, and this meant a series of moves executed with consummate generalship during the spring and summer of 1956, while the efficient lobby in America spread the Watteau garden picture.

In the first place, old General Tran van Sioai of the Hoa Hao

had to be removed. The dickering was long and tedious but in the end he was bought out for a sum reported to run to a couple of million dollars. On the pleading of his wife he was coaxed back to Saigon where Diem could watch him, and there he died. That left Bacut the only important Hoa Hao guerrilla in the field—Bacut whose days were numbered as

Communists in his rear pushed him inexorably toward the trap Diem and Nhu were baiting. The incredible thing about this period of consolidation of power is that, aside from the lack of integrity displayed by our people, not an official of the overstaffed agencies we had operating in Vietnam found fault with Diem's methods from the standpoint of common sense. The same can be said of our press. For every move in the crushing process taking place before their eyes left in its wake a swelling reservoir of rancor that sooner or later must inevitably submerge Diem and react against us. That we no! only condoned but approved and encouraged every flaunting of justice in order to break the opposition, is inexcusable.

When the Cao Dai pope, who was in his late seventies but had been charged by Diem with having seduced vestal maidens of the Cao Dai sect, escaped from house arrest and fled to Pnom Penh, Cambodia, Time magazine of March 5, 1956, sneered at him and his sect and chalked up another victory for our side. As reported by Temps du Paris, May 24, 1956, on March 24 a Frenchman named Rene Rogat was given a prison sentence for expressing opinions "touching on the dignity of President Diem." Each Vietnamese who thought as Rogat did—and there were millions—felt the long arm of Diem's police and Diem's courts.

A general named Nguyen van Phuoc was sentenced to death on August 9 for siding with the Binh Xuyen in April of 1955. Aside from creating more enemies for Diem, Phuoc's death sentence provided a moral lesson. Just twenty-four hours earlier Diem's police had raided the home of General Nguyen thanh Phuong and his brother. With much hullabaloo, two heavy mortars, 42 machine guns, ten cases of grenades and two tons of ammunition were seized. The UP report in the N. Y. Herald Tribune, European edition, August 9, 1956, was headed "Vietnam raid pays off."

Phuong, it will be remembered, was the Cao Dai general who sold out to Diem for $3.6 million dollars for himself and some more for his troops in the same month that Nguyen van Phuoc defected to the Binh Xuyen. Phuong's brother, Danh, had been paid a sizable sum to organize a puppet political party called the Phuc Quoc Hoi, composed of Cao Dai de

fectors enlisted to demonstrate in Diem's favor. The raid of August 8 was the first of the moves that dragged Phuong and his brother in the mud until Nhu had milked them in fines and outright confiscations of the money

they had been paid for saving Diem the year before. Vietnamese were to learn that they could not win.

These were the minor matters; the big moves had been going on since early spring. Parallel lines of secret police and security forces were multiplying. Police organizations and unlimited dollars could insure the appearance of submission in Saigon, but the Vietminh in the north, and Bacut, living off his grass-roots supporters in Can-Tho, required other treatment. Of the two Bacut was the more urgent.

Diem's ambassador to Japan was Nguyen ngoc Tho, the finance minister discussed in an earlier chapter. Tho was happy in Tokyo when left to do his job. Madame Nhu had Turned her violent tongue on him on one of her visits. Tho took it with bowed head, in front of his embassy staff. He exercised the same self-control when the attractive secretary who shared his meals was banished to the servants' table for the duration of la Nhu's visit. He could console himself with the thought that Diem, the celibate who feared women, with or without tantrums, was as naggingly hen-pecked in his own palace; without daring to lift his head either.

Tho was called to Saigon for consultation early in 1956. On his way back to Tokyo he received orders in Hong Kong to turn around and return to Saigon for an assignment from the president.

Bacut, the dissident Hoa Hao, as we have related, had taken to the brush and sworn not to cut his hair until his country was reunited and free. To seal his vow he had cut off a finger and ground it into the dust with his heel. Being anti-Diem and a seasoned guerrilla, he enjoyed the sympathy if not the open support of millions of Vietnamese. Gradually, however, with Communists at his back and Diem troops harassing his front, Bacut felt the net closing in. To ease the pressure he agreed to cease attacking the Reds if they would pull their agents out of his territory and leave him alone. Communistlike, they broke the promise. Bacut summarily seized twelve Vietminh terrorists and executed them. The wrath of the Vietminh descended on his head. Instead of leaving Bacut in the field as a useful buffer defending the rice paddies, Diem and Nhu decided to set a trap. Nguyen ngoc Tho was selected to handle it.

Tho contacted Bacut's uncle, Huynh kirn Hoan, and offered

safe conduct if Bacut would come in to discuss rallying to the government. Bacut proceeded to the village designated and was promptly

seized under pretext that the truce had expired. He was hurriedly brought to a rigged trial. An uncle of Madame Nhu was the judge, and only one witness dared to appear for the defendant: He was Bacut's uncle, who had acted as gobetween in arranging the truce, and he disappeared immediately after testifying. It was a farce from beginning to end in which Bacut dominated the court. At one point he lifted the black shirt covering his emaciated figure and showed his body, covered with scars received fighting Communists, and dared any man present to show as many.

When he finished they led him out to a rusty guillotine left behind by the French. A million and a half Hoa Hao members vowed revenge. The American press sang Diem's praise. Diem's New York propagandists and a cooperating press told America that the Hoa Hao sect had been wiped out. Senator Mike Mansfield successfully imposed the same opinion on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In reply to a letter from this author setting forth the situation in Saigon and warning of the future accounting he was helping to make inevitable, Senator Mansfield replied with a condescending brush-off. He wrote, "I was very much interested in what you had to say relative to the situation in free Vietnam. Personally, I think the only hope lies in the continuation of Mr. Ngo dinh Diem, and I was pleased to note that on yesterday a constitution has finally been agreed on. I recognize the fact that there are tremendous difficulties still inherent in the Vietnam situation, but when I think of the odds against Mr. Diem two years ago—even one year ago—and think of the strides which have been made in the intervening period, I cannot help but be impressed by the progress made by this remarkable man. It is true that he may be stubborn and obdurate, that he may not listen to counsel; but it is a fact that a free Vietnam exists at the present time and that in large part this free entity is the result of the efforts of Mr. Diem."

In reality, within two weeks of the writing of Mansfield's letter, the Hoa Hao cost us and Vietnam millions of dollars. Leagued together in a new nationalist lineup that had lost its feudal character, they were raiding plantations less than fifty miles from Saigon in broad daylight. General Bay Mon, the former Binh Xuyen chief of staff, reported to his old leader that some of his followers, pursued by Diem forces, had been driven into North Vietnam, but that if Le van Vien would

return and lead them, all of them would come back, bringing ten Vietminh deserters apiece.

Not a day passed but a communal police chief or notable was kidnapped or assassinated. Diem's army was constantly under attack. As a reward for his role in the triumph with Bacut, Nguyen ngoc Tho was made vice-president. There was no nonsense about it, no costly, time-consuming election. Diem said, "You are vice-president," and he was.

What chants of victory went up from the American press!

> "As of now President Diem is in firm control of his country," wrote Bill Henry in the Los Angeles Times. "He has the confidence of the people. He has instituted land reform, currency reform and administrative reform." In his enthusiasm to support Diem's principle that "stability must come first; democracy can follow," Bill Henry wrote, "He [Diem] smashed the rival armies, jailed the trouble-makers and, above all, established the sort of government the Vietnamese understand and appreciate."

Bob Considine, in his glowing "Indochina Payoff," published in the Los Angeles Examiner of October 17, 1956, went Bill Henry one better and polished off the Communists and the emperor as well. "You never hear of Ho or Bao Dai any more," Considine ended the column in which he pictured Vietnam as "a strong barrier between Red China and Indonesia."

Had Considine done his homework his readers would have heard of Bao Dai, for Bao Dai a few weeks earlier had sent a pathetic letter to the pious Diem, asking for news of his mother. Diem replied that he did not know where she was.

At the time Considine wrote his "Indochina Payoff," every paragraph of which was unsound, the Chinese population of Vietnam was moving toward the Peking camp in a mass movement that was to affect all Southeast Asia, and the Ngo dinhs were trying to strike a deal with Ho chi Minh behind America s back. Nhu was obsessed with the thought that the Americans might cut off their aid some day, or that an opposition leader might gain American support. Openly he admitted that he and his family would see the country go to the Vietminh before they would ever step down. Privately he determined to insure the family's tenure of office by making a deal with the North in advance, as even Nhu's most devoted apologist, Joseph Alsop, was to admit in his New York Herald Tribune column of May 15, 1964.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE BLOW FALLS ON SOUTH VIETNAM'S CHINESE

With Bacut gone the only logical whipping boy left was the Chinese. It was still too early to turn on the Americans. At first glance Diem's decision in August 1956 to nationalize the 800,000 to 1,000,000 Chinese living in the country seems contradictory to his attempt to come to terms with Communist North Vietnam. The clamp-down on the Chinese could only drive them into the arms of Peking, which would theoretically stiffen the Reds in North Vietnam. But western logic does not necessarily apply in oriental politics. The August 1956 move against the Chinese residing in Vietnam was for an immediate gain. We have quoted the remark of Mr. Liebman, the Formosa public relations agent, that Diem's hatred of the Chinese was a pathological thing. For Nhu running the Chinese out of eleven professions could be exceedingly profitable as a license for expropriation. On the other hand the accord with North Vietnam was a long-term project.

The greater part of the Americans fishing in Vietnam's troubled waters cared nothing about the anti-Chinese measures and closed their eyes to the fact that Nhu was putting out feelers to the Vietminh. To assume that no one in the CIA, the Saigon embassy or the State Department knew what was going on is to underrate the enemy. Quite likely Mr. Randolph Kidder accepted and passed on to his superiors Madame Nhu's denial of such feelers, but those who knew what was afoot and hushed it up must have been dedicated to the principle that every negotiation between Communists and non-Communists, in an attempt to reach a modus vivendi, was a step forward. As regards the injustice done the Chinese, such people considered only the matter of their loyalty to Diem.

Robert Alden, in the New York Times of October 9, 1956, sugared his report by stating that Diem had "extended" citizenship to his Chinese minority. The inference was that he was doing them a favor. "By conferring citizenship on the great bulk of the Chinese here, President Diem has given them exactly the same status as tjie Vietnamese. As citizens the

Chinese must register and then will be free to carry on their businesses as before," stated Mr. Alden. He erroneously wrote that "Diem's first steps were directed against the Communists," for these had not been inconvenienced. The next move, continued Mr. Alden, was against "the

religious-feudal gangster sects of the Binh Xuyen, Hoa Hao and Cao Dai. Now that these groups have largely been eliminated, President Diem, according to those close to him, feels that the existence of a separate Chinese community within the country must be ended." Another way of saying it would have been that the Chinese were the next scapegoats in line, when the Communist threat was the one that should have been eliminated before anything else. Instead Diem chose to multiply his enemies before tackling the big one.

Robert Alden continued, "Orders have been issued making it illegal for noncitizens to own businesses in eleven important categories. These include transport and many retail trades, which until now have been dominated mainly by Chinese nationals." Alden admitted, "The new laws, which were issued last month, came as a blow to the Chinese community of approximately 1,000,000f persons living in South Vietnam. There was a run on the banks as some Chinese withdrew their money. Some Chinese left the country, crossing the border into Cambodia."

Industrious Chinese provided the machinery on which the economies of most of the nations of Southeast Asia operated. An estimated sixteen million of them were thriving in the Philippines, Burma, Indonesia and Borneo. Copra trade was almost entirely in their hands in the Philippines. In Malaysia they made up half the population and possessed huge holdings in rubber plantations and in mines. Two hundred and fifty thousand Chinese were installed in Cambodia before refugees from Vietnam doubled their number, and half the population of Thailand was Chinese. Strong bonds existed between all these Chinese communities, making them potential pillars or cancers in any country where they were implanted.

Since Diem had no other whipping boy in September of 1956 to divert hate from himself, with a stroke of a pen he started the landslide which made the Chinese communities of all Southeast Asia potential fifth columns for Peking. The Chinese, who had been in Indochina for generations, had long been envied because of their prosperity. Diem and Nhu borrowed a page from Hitler and made them the Jews of South Vietnam.

David Hotham, soft-spoken correspondent in Saigon for the

London Times and the Economist, called the new moves "Chinoiseries in South Vietnam," in his London Economist report, September 29, 1956. "A bolt recently fell out of the blue sky on the Chinese minority in South

Vietnam," said Hotham. "It was 'nationalized' by President Ngo dinh Diem, much as President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. On August 21 [1956] a decree published by the South Vietnamese government declared that all Chinese children born in Vietnam were Vietnamese and must take Vietnamese names."

The full import of that edict is hard for the westerner to appreciate. Many Americans are attached to their names by pride of family, but to the Chinese it struck at the very roots of their ancestor worship.

"One peculiarity of the decree—apart from the fact that it concerned only the Chinese—was that it was retroactive, so that not only all Chinese children born in Vietnam in the future become Vietnamese, but also all children born there in the past. Since some families have lived in the country for several generations, octogenarian Chinese are finding a new nationality thrust upon them without option in their declining years."

The point that Hotham recognized, and which our press overlooked, was that Diem had chosen the moment when the Vietminh were saturating the country by every means at their disposal to hand over to them the community forming the very heart and core of the nation's economy. Hotham wrote, "The Chinese were attracted in large numbers from South China to the fertile rice lands of the Mekong delta, where with commercial acumen for which they are renowned they soon took over the bulk of the rice trade, and indeed many other trades, under their exclusive control . . . They had their own schools, far-reaching economic rights, and a commercial and administrative autonomy which made them almost a self-sufficing community. This state of affairs was always resented by the Vietnamese. But the situation since Vietnam became independent has been delicate. To dismantle the Chinese commercial structure overnight, on top of the drastic modifications already made to the French trading system, would demolish an already shaky economy ... In addition to the law which 'vietnamifies' all Chinese children ever born in Vietnam, a second, more unusual edict, prohibits the practice by foreigners of eleven professions. These involve most of the retail trade and almost all the entire intermediary rice trade, both the special province of the Chinese."

What Hotham said was true, but he neglected to add that the edict against foreigners hit some half a million Cambodians

also, and could not help boomeranging against the Vietnamese living in Cambodia.

“There is, nevertheless, some uneasiness in Saigon about this apparent master-stroke—and not merely among the Chinese, whom it most closely concerns,” Mr. Hotham continued. “The 300,000 Chinese not born in Vietnam will presumably have to abandon their professions unless some way around the edict (such as operating under the name of a Vietnamese member of the family) can be found . . . The Chinese, who for about 5000 years have regarded themselves as superior to all the other nations of the earth, consider it a mortal affront to be saddled with the nationality of a state which in the past they have thought of as a dominion of the Chinese empire. Chinese sentiment is not mollified by the official attitude of the Vietnamese government that they are conferring a favour on the Chinese by taking them into the bosom of the body politic. Meanwhile Taipeh has registered ‘deep concern’ at the South Vietnamese action and recalled its Saigon representative for consultation. Peking—which under the Communist constitution regards all overseas Chinese as Chinese nationals—has so far remained silent.”

David Hotham’s fears, expressed and unexpressed, were well founded. Rice prices soared on the Saigon market; this commodity is of course Asia’s political barometer. Distribution broke down completely. Nhu’s Can Lao Nhan Vi with its seventy thousand or more informers scrambled over the carcass of South Vietnam’s trading system, looking for opportunities to make a quick profit by confiscation. It must be remembered that the Chinese being told to take Vietnamese nationality or get out could not take their capital out of thfe country. Money being so transported or businesses run by Chinese who had not found a way to circumvent the law were fair game for seizure by the president’s brother.

True, as Hotham said, Peking was remaining silent as far as shouting from the housetops was concerned, for things were going quite satisfactorily. The first reaction of the Chinese being despoiled was to reason: Diem is Americas man, and Formosa is America’s protege. We’ll ask Formosa to request Washington to tell her man to go easy on us.

The Chinese of Cholon were soon to learn that the world which America leads is not one big family. There are degrees of relationship, and a priority system justified by what the comparatively small group in command considers America s interests.” Thus we find Mr. Hamilton

Wright Sr.'s $150,000a-year public relations contract with Formosa contingent on

obtaining American editorial support for a mainland invasion in Formosa's interest and the world's. Yet the State Department tells Mr. Wright "No go," because such an invasion would not be in "the best interests of the United States." (Testimony before the Fulbright committee, July 1962)

In August 1956 Washington answered Formosa's request for a word in Diem's ear to go easy on his Chinese, whom Formosa could not absorb, with orders not to rock the boat. Keep out of it, Washington told Formosa. The blow to Formosa's prestige throughout Southeast Asia was fatal. Peking stepped in and said, through its Vietminh underground, "Now you see who your friends are." Chinese were told to whom to give their money in Saigon. Peking agents would hand it back to them, minus a small fee, in Cambodia, Singapore, Hong Kong, or anyplace they wanted to go. A clandestine organization called the Patriotic and Democratic Chinese Association of Vietnam grew by leaps and bounds, and one of the Chinese it helped get away from Saigon became financial advisor to the queen of Cambodia. All along the board it was a political bound ahead for Peking and a setback for Formosa.

Taipeh began ferrying Chinese to Formosa, but for every one that opted to go to Chiang Kai-shek's free China scores took the road to Peking. On August 5, 1957, twelve Chinese students who had been evacuated with a group of 245 told the Formosa press (in an interview set up by the government) that Chinese had been assassinated in Saigon and others sent to forced labor camps for resisting the nationalization edict. Many, the students said, had elected to take Vietnamese nationality but disappeared nevertheless. The Chinese community believed their fellow countrymen had been assassinated rather than permit them to thwart confiscation of their property by naturalization.

Those known to possess liquid assets were denied exit permits, which relegated them to a life of terror in Vietnam, unable to do business yet constantly watched lest they try to escape. The seventeen-year-old Miss Lee Shiu-fong, daughter of a Chinese lumber merchant, told the Formosa press that her fiance had requested Vietnamese nationality so his family could retain its property. A short time later his body was found in the sea. The

boy's father was then driven from his property because no member of the family was Vietnamese.

A report was sent to Dr. Marcel Junod, field man for the International Red Cross in Geneva, stating that the use of the river in carrying out assassinations had become a common

practice. Chinese claimed that victims were first arrested on fake warrants or without warrants at all, which permitted the police to deny any knowledge of them. Then an injection was administered to induce sleep. The sleeping prisoner was thrown in the water, and a death by drowning report would follow, explained as another Chinese suicide over the nationalization decree.

The Taiwan press conference inflamed Formosa. UP filed a short dispatch on it, dated August 5, 1957. The Hong Kong Tiger Standard printed it the following day, but no U. S. paper carried the story. An American lady wrote a letter about it, which ended up on Harold Oram's desk. Oram sent the letter to Father de Jaegher in Saigon, and by September 20 had a soothing reply: "The Chinese students repatriated to Free China were discontented, because they were repatriated without being allowed any money—except 400 paistres ($5 in American money)—and of course it is impossible to exchange piastres in Taiwan; also at that time there was a lot of discontent between the Chinese and Vietnamese, but I am glad to report that the situation has been improved."

It was easy to lull the posers of embarrassing questions in America, but in Formosa, Thailand, and wherever the Chinese of Saigon had cousins the cancer spread. One might assume that in view of Diem's tipping of the scales in favor of Peking throughout Southeast Asia's Chinese communities, Formosa's public relations man in America would try to muster some opposition. Not a bit of it! Mr. Liebman's first loyalty was to his Madison Avenue associate. On Committee of One Million stationery Formosa's own propagandist wrote a California lady who had circulated the Formosa student complaint, questioning the motives of anyone who "attacked . . . one of our strongest allies in Asia today."

Duped as America was by propaganda labelled as news, Diem and Nhu never doubted for a moment that the lid might someday blow sky high. Consequently their feelers went out toward Hanoi. Not until May 15, 1964,

in a column headed “Humpty Dumpty,” did the Ngo dinh family’s most determined apologist, Joe Alsop, admit that Nhu had ever made overtures to the North. By that time Nhu’s double-dealing could no longer be denied, so Alsop provided an out for himself by saying that Nhu “had succumbed to the combined pressures of the unending war and his own egomania.” The inference was that Nhu had once been all that Joe claimed him to be but that he had changed. “In brief,” wrote Alsop, “the unbalanced Nhu had begun negotiating with the North Vietnamese

Communists in the last months before his death. These negotiations, strongly promoted by a secret French intrigue, had in turn caused the Communists to slacken their military pressure on Diem and Nhu.” No matter how far he had to reach, Alsop was determined to make the French responsible when his hero went sour.

In early May of 1956 reports of negotiations between Nhu and Ho chi Minh via Pnom Penh, Cambodia, were so precise and so alarming that on May 4, 1956, Nguyen ton Hoan tried to get an appointment with Francis Melloy, at the Vietnam desk in the American embassy in Paris. Melloy, with the pompous arrogance of youth and the then popular conception of Diem as America’s man, replied that if Hoan walked into his office he would not kick him out but he certainly had no desire to see the man. He added, “I don’t believe we’ll be bothered by these fellows [Diem’s opposition] much longer; they’ll soon be running out of money.” Melloy knew whereof he spoke, for our services were then cooperating with Diem’s to separate every opposition leader, no matter how anti-Communist, from his source of funds, and to expose their contributors to Nhu so that he could confiscate their property.

Throughout the hot summer of 1956 Tran buu Kiem (sometimes called Tran buu Taem) worked in Saigon with a Vietminh emissary named Pham van Bach, trying to smooth out an agreement. American officials must have known these two Hanoi agents were in town. Bach was an old-time Ho chi Minh political commissar; during the war with the French he had headed Ho’s “South Vietnam Resistance Committee.” Kiem had been secretary-general of the native socialist party, the Dan Chu Dang, which united with the Communists to form the Vietminh. One of the first straws in the wind was Diem’s announcement to the press on May 12, 1956, that he was opposed to any foreign bases in South Vietnam, even American.

Nhu's right hand man and Joe Alsop's hero, Albert Pham ngoc Thao, kept a line open to Ho chi Minh's ear through his brother, Gaston, who was a Ho chi Minh official. Parallel negotiations continued in Paris, where Albert Pham ngoc Thao's father headed the Vietminh League and a Ho chi Minh representative named Ho dac Di had installed himself in the Hotel St. James as head of a health mission to France. There was no doubt about it, as Premier Nguyen van Tam remarked, Diem and Nhu felt that with America so committed behind them, they could negotiate with the Communist North from a position of strength.

As a link between French Reds and the Vietminh an or

ganization called Union Vietnamienne pour la Paix, 1 Unite, et l'Amitie avec la France was set up at 40 rue Pascal, where Diem's agents and Ho's met regularly. Here, on May 13, 1956, Ho dac Di gave a lecture in which he stated that Ho chi Minh had ordered his followers to hide and bury their arms in South Vietnam in 1954, with the idea of later unearthing them and arming new divisions capable of creating a neutralist climate. Gradual occupation of territory, rather than open attack, was to be the order of the day.

Early in this book we made passing mention of a Japanese named Komatsu. General Navarre, on page 127 in his book The Agony of Indochina, hazards the conjecture that "the francophobia of Mr. Diem seems to stem above all from his troubles with Admiral Decoux who ordered his arrest for collaborating with the Japanese during the war 1940-1945."

Komatsu, Diem's Japanese friend, hid him when Admiral Decoux ordered his arrest and in mid-1956 Komatsu returned to Saigon as a Japanese trade agent. Politically Komatsu described himself as a socialist. In practice he was often farther to the left. After five months in Saigon he proceeded to Hanoi, via Pnom Penh. It was no secret that he was on a personal mission for Ngo dinh Diem. From Hanoi he returned to Saigon.

In the months that followed Komatsu was to emerge as the neutral party negotiating between Hanoi, Saigon and Paris. In April 1957 he flew to France. While in Paris Komatsu confided that Diem was having increasing trouble controlling his brother and sister-in-law.

Back in Pnom Penh a Vietnamese Red named Nguyen manh Ha, son-in-law of the French Communist deputy, Maranne, started publishing his

Tribune at No. 5 Vithei Preah Ang Makhah Vann. A British Labor member of Parliament and an impressive list of British and French socialists were so closely associated with Nguyen manh Ha that it was never clear who was doing the speaking when Ha's Tribune of November 14, 1956, came out with its call for Diem to sit down with Ho's representatives and work out a "just compromise." Nguyen manh Ha assured Diem, "This manifesto has been elaborately discussed and edited by men close to you who nourish no personal ambition and have no eye on power." It was both a hint that the Ngo dinhs could stay in power and an admission that infiltrators were in every level of the Saigon government, all the way to the top.

Throughout 1956 and 1957 Ha's office in Pnom Penh had been a relay and meeting place for Ngo dinh Nhu's emissaries

and Ho chi Minh's. While they talked, Ho's military-political commissar, Le Duan, maintained an office in the wings from which he dispatched messengers to agents of the Communist Committee for South Vietnam Action, which a Vietnamese named Nguyen van Tay was running from Dinh Bang, situated in the area where Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam meet. From Dinh Bang the network spread to Dr. Pham ngoc Thach in the committee's Saigon office, and out of this tenuous line grew the efficient chain that wiped out Diem's village notables and committee leaders until the countryside accepted what was to be its way of life from 1956 on, rule by Diem's government by day and Ho chi Minh's by night.

Lying dormant, scanning every American report for a sign of encouragement, the non-Communist opposition to Diem in Vietnam awaited America's reaction to the overtures with the North. Time magazine as usual was regarded as the official voice and launcher of trial balloons for the State Department. Consequently, when Time of August 26, 1957, reproached Diem for not mentioning the Communist threat on his visit to Thailand, there was a surge of hope. The same issue of Time stated that Nhu had been won over to "a Nehru-style thesis that North and South Vietnam can eventually be unified if Red China can be talked into accepting the concept of neutral buffer states in Southeast Asia. Time told its readers of the existence of a "Saigon theory that Communist Ho chi Minh should get all he can from the Russians and Chinese while Diem gets all he can from

the U. S. in hope that in about five years North and South may be reunified outside the world power blocs."

Vietnamese nationalists were jubilant. Could it be that Time, State Department's spokesman, was preparing the public for a change of course? Through the Swedish diplomatic mission in Saigon they got the answer, "No, Time was only giving a warning to Diem and Nhu. America will continue to ignore the unrest in the country as long as no big explosion occurs. As long as Diem can hold the lid on he will be backed."

The only big explosion possible would be a revolt in the army, a feudal army of Ngo dinh Diem's which had replaced the feudal armies of Le van Vien and the sects. Plots were rife, but so efficient was Nhu's informer system and so great the distrust it fostered among fellow Vietnamese that no group of plotters knew about the others.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE DOWNGRADE BECOMES PERCEPTIBLE

The critical year was 1957, the year when men studying developments in Asia as doctors watch the temperature chart of a patient, knew it was time for America to quit swimming against the current. Unfortunately everyone responsible for America's policy in South Vietnam regarded any criticism as an attack against themselves.

Peter Kalischer's declaration in Collier's of July 6, 1956, that Diem was "Upsetting the Red Timetable" was arrant nonsense. Nothing was more elastic than the Red timetable. It was the Red plan that was immutable, and that plan had never ceased to move ahead. It is against the background of Ho chi Minh's and General Giap's first rule for a war of subversion that every event in South Vietnam must be studied.^ That rule: Long war—short campaign. Through "long war" the adversary ruins himself, is drawn deeper and deeper into a mire of local actions. The wager of subversive war profits by a slow mobilization, arming himself first by arms taken from the enemy, later with arms furnished from without.

The adversary is kept struggling for terrain; the wager of subversive war spreads his domination over people. When the wager of subversive war senses that the balance is in his favor, the period of "long war" ends and the "short campaign" begins. His greatest cards are the climate of general fatigue in the camp of the enemy and control of the people in the adversary's terrain. During the "long war" period of small actions at places and times of the adversary's choosing, the surface picture of government

control is carefully maintained. Not till the subversive adversary himself is ready to come into the open and launch his final "short campaign is the government's delusion of power destroyed. The adversary who permits a subversive general to drag him through the "long war" stage to the final "short campaign" flurry and the knock-out wastes his money, his time and his men, and in the end his country.

The French army learned to its sorrow the lesson of Ho chi Minh's golden rule. The American press, State Depart

ment and Pentagon never gave them credit for having learned it; thus, when assassination squads of the Tong Bo, Ho chi Minh's northern council, murdered 472 village notables in South Vietnam in 1957 (over one a day!) those American officials who knew of it interpreted it as a fight for terrain and concluded blithely, "We are still winning." The contrary was the truth. By proving that the Tong Bo could strike where it wished, and that the Saigon government was powerless to protect its officials, Tong Bo administration first paralleled then out-weighed government administration. Village heads were permitted to present the external appearances of Saigon administration by day in return for accepting Vietminh administration by night. The enemy's will was ruthlessly imposed.

In 1959 the number of village chiefs assassinated zoomed to an admitted 1,600. On May 25, 1961, President Kennedy was to admit that 4,000 heads of villages had been killed in 1960, but the Vietnamese knew that 13,000 (in a country that had only 12,000 to 14,000 villages) was nearer the true figure. That the "long war" stage was being won by the Communists was undeniable. Yet censorship in Saigon and collusion in Washington were to suppress the facts till late 1963. Every study of the down-hill progression inevitably brings us back to 1957 as the year when America should have struck at the real enemy and ceased to impose the man and family whose very presence drove people toward Ho chi Minh, while our State Department and propagandists put pins in maps and boasted of holding ground.

Diem and his brother Nhu, who with no official post in the government remained in the wings like some Machiavelli guiding a rutheless renaissance prince, reasoned that if one could conceal the blight and repeat insistently that it did not exist, somehow everything would be all right. The

fatal weakness of Nhu and his wife lay in their delusion that they could outsmart, delude and suppress—indefinitely.

In 1956 their advisors continually urged them to do something about Buu Hoi and his American companion Miss Ellen Hammer. Diem was giving them too much ammunition —the negotiations with Hanoi, the arbitrary arrests, the despoiling of the Chinese. Buu Hoi had means of knowing what was going on. In Europe he had a press in the socialist weekly favorable to Mendes-France, L'Express. In America Miss Hammer could publish their anti-Diem reports in the Pacific Spectator (see vol. 9, no. 3, 1955), put out by Stanford Press. Princeton Press, in the East, was in her pocket. And these two could not be suppressed. "Make peace with them,"

Diem's propagandists and political advisors urged. So Buu Hoi and Miss Hammer were invited to Saigon as Diem's guests in the fall of 1956 and overnight their attacks ceased. A series of pro-Diem articles by Buu Hoi appeared in L'Express; the two held a press conference in Saigon at which Diem was showered with praise; and Prince Buu Hoi was made ambassador to Morocco.

The whirring machine working for Mendes-France in Paris continued the build-up of Buu Hoi as a valuable interlocutor in his new post in Rabat, linking Diem, Ho chi Minh and the socialists in France. Buu Hoi was considered to be the man who would rise in Vietnam when Mendes-France returned to power. The suppression of all information on this in America could only signify that Americans in high positions approved. In Vietnam maintenance of the picture of surface serenity was by police state methods.

In a report headed "Diem's Grip Tight in South Vietnam," as early as February 15, 1956, Robert Alden reported in the New York Times that "Many persons suspected of communist subversion have been arrested [in Vietnam] recently. The figure is usually given as 8,000. In some cases at least there are indications that the arrests were made on unsubstantial evidence. . . . Arrests are made in the middle of the night on flimsy evidence; letters are steamed open and personal mail read; brutality toward prisoners is not unknown.^ Communist techniques of self-criticism in government offices and the indoctrination of youth are also practiced."

If millions of Americans on reading anything in the New York Times that they do not want to believe assume automatically that the opposite must be true, the blame must rest with the New York Times. Not until it is too late does the average reader have any way of knowing, when the odds

are so heavy against him, which Times story must by the law of percentages be right. So Robert Alden's report was forgotten, and by February 22, 1957, when a young student took a shot at Diem in Ban Me Thuot and missed him, no observations were made on the relation between cause and effect. Instead of asking why the boy acted, the event was used to engulf America in another wave of Diem propaganda. Not a paper asked what happened to the boy, whether he was tortured, whether he was ever given a trial. He had attacked America's man; that was enough. When Generalissimo Franco executed a known terrorist whose hands were red with the blood of hundreds of innocent victims our press outdid itself: an avalanche of letters descended on Madrid. No one was told or has ever

asked what became of the boy who shot at Diem or why he did it. The pat answer was that he was a Communist, which he was not.

Two days before the shooting in Ban Me Thuot the armored car regiment stationed at Go-Vap, about six miles from Saigon, stood poised to roll on the capital, when the plot was disclosed by a sergeant who preferred the certainty of enrichment and promotion to the hazards of a coup d'etat. Colonel Hai, commander of the regiment, was trapped. A commandant named Chieu managed to reach Pnom Penh. All Southeast Asia knew of the plot, its indication of rot within the army and the aggravation caused by the executions that followed, but not a word reached America.

With Prince Buu Hoi and Miss Hammer, the only antiDiemists with a press in America, bought off, the way was clear for a junket, and what a carnival it was. The propaganda team thought of everything. Repression of all opposition? Diem took care of that with a stroke of a pen. The last thing he did before taking off for America was to announce the formation of a "legal opposition," the newly-formed Democratic Bloc, under that old fair-haired boy of America's wartime OSS, Phan quang Dan, formerly known as Phan huy Dan. In Paris Dan was represented by a pockmarked doctor named Pham huy Co who aspired to be ambassador to France under an eventual Dan government. Co was a great asset to Dan on any terms, for Co's brother-in-law was none other than Tran chanh Thanh, the former Communist whose long arm extended into every security organization and informer ring in Vietnam. Co and Dan's friends in CIA were Dan's insurance against arrest; so if an opposition was necessary, even one handpicked by the man in power, to kid the Americans into thinking

democratic government existed under their protege, Dan was the man who would get the nod.

Pham huy Co held a press conference followed by a cocktail party in the Hotel Lutetia in Paris. It was paid for by American aid. Most of the journalists present quipped about the invitation cards, on which "legal opposition" was emphasized, as though being handpicked by the man in power was something in Dan's favor. America's capacity for being conned was unlimited. Our press unblushingly swallowed "the legal opposition," which was never allowed to campaign for anything in reality. Two years later when Dan was elected to the national assembly, he was forcibly thrown out of the

assembly by Diem's police.

* * *

What a heyday the Diem lobby had, whether calling itself American Friends of Vietnam or International Rescue Committee, from the beginning of Diem's 1957 visit to the U.S. until he left; for Diem's triumph was their triumph. Ike personally awaited his distinguished guest at the airport in Washington as the Columbine 111, which had been sent to Honolulu to meet him, neared home. The National Press Club turned out, Congress (on the eve of a debate over foreign aid) listened to Diem as he campaigned for more money, appropriated for longer periods—a "crash program" for a leap ahead was what exponents of aid called it.

"Diem fooled everybody," said a column (bearing all the earmarks of Harold Oram's public relations handouts) in the New York Journal-American of May 11. "He eliminated gangster national police, outlawed gambling and prostitution in Saigon, won the loyalty of powerful religious sects, crushed rebellious and jealous foes." Only the "fooled everybody" was true.

For three days (May 12, 13, 14, 1957) Marguerite Higgins, not yet campaigning for a Communist-supported gang of cutthroats in Algeria, made her Herald Tribune column a dithyrambic plea for Diem, whom the Trib's editorialist advanced on his page and newswriters on theirs. As Marguerite Higgins saw it, cutting off the funds with which Diem was supplied might save $3,000,000 (as proposed by Senator Bridges of New Hampshire) or $10,000,000 (as proposed by the United States Chamber of Commerce), but it would bring communism to the shores of Japan, all Asia and the Middle East.

Said an editorial of the Herald Tribune on May 9, “His [Diem’s] people began to listen to him and turned their backs on communists.” In the same issue Walter Briggs extolled the “Miracle-Maker from Asia—Diem of South Vietnam.” Senator Mike Mansfield, Democratic whip, according to the Washington Post of that same day, “said the speech [made by Diem before Congress] was ‘excellent and right to the point.’ ” The following morning the New York Times announced that in reply to a journalist asking if he sought more American aid, Diem replied, “We have accomplished a good deal. We have been successful in rehabilitating 860,000 refugees from the north and this problem is almost finished. We have maintained an army which is an Army.”

On Sunday, May 11, 1957, America’s folly took off for New York in a cloud of glory. American conservatives, caught up in the mass intoxication, swallowed anti-Communist headlines

and exulted in the thought that somewhere we were coming out on top. New York dignitaries awaited Diem (accompanied by Vu van Thai and Tran le Quang, the former Vietminh officials) at the airport, rushed them to St. Patrick’s Cathedral for a mass and from there to Tarrytown, New York, for a luncheon with John D. Rockefeller, III, and Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller. Among the guest falling over themselves in praise of their guest of honor were Dr. Henry T. Heald, president of Ford Foundation, and his wife; Joseph E. Johnson, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; John J. McCloy, chairman of the board of Chase Manhattan Bank, and Mrs. McCloy; Ogden R. Reid, president and editor of the New York Herald Tribune (which gave Diem rave stories on pages 1,13, 14 and 15 the following morning) and Mrs. Reid; James J. Rorimer, president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Mrs. Rorimer; Dean Rusk, president of the Rockefeller Foundation and Mrs. Rusk; Paul J. Sherbert, executive director of the Asia Society, and Mrs. Sherbert; Howard C. Shepherd, chairman of the board of the First National City Bank, and Mrs. Shepherd; and Kenneth T. Young, Jr., director of the office of Southeastern Asian affairs in the State Department, and Mrs. Young.

On Monday, the 12th, Diem was given his ticker tape parade, luncheon by the mayor at the Waldorf-Astoria, and an afternoon reception by the Council on Foreign Relations. But of all the honors heaped upon him, including the fawning adoration of the Far Eastern Council on Commerce

and Industry, the most transparent was the banquet at which Angier Biddle Duke presided on the evening of May 12 in New York's Hotel Ambassador.

From the first a cursory glance at the men and organizations playing the Diem card should have awakened decent Americans to the fact that they were being played like yokels at a county fair, but the public's gullibility was boundless because they wanted to believe. When the awakening came, when the forces boiling in Vietnam could be suppressed no longer and Diem was pushed over, with the approval and encouragement of the former president of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dean Rusk, who had helped to lionize Diem at John D. Rockefeller Hi's on May 11, 1957, each dupe found an out satisfactory to himself. Joe Alsop assuaged his ego by claiming that Diem and Nhu had changed. Thousands of American conservatives followed the course of most comfort and least thinking: they decided the forces represented at the Rockefeller luncheon had destroyed Diem and arranged his death

when they found they could not manage him, and from that conclusion, which freed America's conservatives from charges of failing to think in 1957, they refused to budge.

Picture the International Rescue Committee banquet for Diem, at the Ambassador. At the head table Angier Biddle Duke and his clique, officially wearing their International Rescue Committee identities that evening, though everyone knew that the same men, with another set of calling cards and letterheads, ran Diem's lobby, the American Friends of Vietnam.

With a straight face a United Press writer announced the farce in the Herald Tribune: "Mr. Diem will receive the International Rescue Committee's award for leadership among free nations at a dinner next Monday. Mr. Diem will be the first recipient of the annual award named for the late polar explorer, Admiral Richard E. Byrd. The Vietnamese government contributed $100,000 to the committee's Hungarian relief work."

Translated literally, Angier Biddle Duke, as head of the IRC, gave his man an award cooked up as a propaganda gimmick for just that occasion. (No one else had ever received it.) And Diem paid off by writing out a check for $100,000 (American taxpayers' money) for his own propagandists, who had honored him under the front organization and would wring the award of its last drop of publicity value under another. Mr. Joseph Buttinger of the IRC is perhaps best known due to widespread

publicity (particularly from his best friend, Leo Cheme) for having gone to Vienna "at his own expense" as representative of the IRC, to help Hungarian refugees after the revolt of October 1956. Mr. Richard Arens, director of the House Un-American Activities Committee, stated in Washington on April 18, 1957, that since the Hungarian patriots were in control from October 23, 1956, until November 15, the only ones who had reason to flee during that period were the Hungarian Communists. "On November 15," he added, "the communists reasserted their control in Hungary. They took over and sealed the borders. Those who came out fell into two categories: first, the Freedom Fighters who were able to get through the machine-gun nests that were established and, secondly, those whom the communists wanted to come out. The security officers have told us repeatedly that it is impossible to screen out the communists and subversives because background information is not available."

This brings up a vital question about the types of refugees Mr. Buttinger and Mr. Cherne expedited into the U.S. during

the wave of sympathy in this country in late 1956 for Hungarian "refugees." How many of these were actual Freedom Fighters and how many were Communists?

Equally important, how many were members of an intermediary group, the Socialist party of Europe, the efficiency of which organization was shown in the Buttinger letter to President Diem? If Mr. Arens' committee had no way of checking the backgrounds of the men in question, the same could hardly be said of Mr. Buttinger after reading the outline of his sources of information as put to Diem.

The next man to receive the award on which Duke and Joseph Buttinger had hung Admiral Byrd's name (Byrd was dead and had no say in the matter) was Germany's socialist leader, Willi Brandt, who used it to show Germans that he, not Adenauer, was the man America preferred. By 1964 a new front, the Dooley Foundation—named for Dr. Thomas Dooley

was added to the keyboard, and the first man to receive

the Dooley Foundation's "Splendid American Award" was Henry Cabot Lodge, for his achievement in polishing off in 1963 the liability (which is to say the Diem regime) which Duke, Buttinger, Leo Cherne—Dooley's friends, in sum—were selling in 1957. P. T. Barnum was never more cynical than the "gang" that sold America on Ngo dinh Diem. Dooley, the idealist, was shamefully exploited, both as a fund raiser and for his publicity value,

by Duke and his group. The New York Times Magazine of April 20, 1958, ran a story signed by Dooley at the time of his fund-raising tour for Medico, an IRC front. Dooley donated the proceeds from his best-seller. Deliver Us from Evil, to Duke's organization. Louella Parsons reported in the Hearst press on December 5, 1959, that Buddy Adler had just paid well over $100,000 for Dooley's movie rights. Pharmaceutical companies were constantly reported as making gifts of instruments and drugs running as high as $50,000 per donation. Dooley so believed in what he was doing that the day he appeared on Martha Deane's morning radio program, where Leo Cherne regularly aired his views, he talked the taxi driver who took him to the WOR studio into donating his tips for the day to IRC.

The Tablet of Feb. 15, 1958, quoted Angier Biddle Duke as setting a $1,000,000 goal for the Dooley fund-raising drive. Mike Wallace, in his New York Post column of March 10, 1958, lauded Dooley for taking nothing from his books, giving everything to IRC and Medico. Even Dooley's death by cancer was wrung to the last donation check by Duke et al.

How much of the flow of dollars financed political activity rather than medical, no one has ever asked.

On November 27, 1957, Dooley spoke in New York. A lady in the audience asked him if he could explain the National Catholic Welfare Conference report on April 8, 1957, on Diem's sentencing a priest to prison and closing down a Catholic paper. So profoundly had the self-sacrificing young doctor been drawn into the game of those making money on him that he replied, "If Diem has imprisoned a priest, you may be sure he had good reason."

Accompanied by Minister of Public Works and Communications Tran le Quang, Ambassador and Mme. Tran van Chuong, and a planeload of State Department officials, Diem took off for Detroit and Lansing, where he and his team at Michigan State went through the same sort of performance Duke had set up in Washington and New York. The Detroit banquet was important, for one must remember that American labor had its own foreign policy and that policy was to meddle in Vietnamese affairs to any extent and by any means that would ensure the perpetuation of Ngo dinh Diem's power. Vietnamese opponents of Diem are still asking if State Department's

Kenneth T. Young, Jr., is related to the Kenneth Young who is assistant public relations chief for Reuther's metal workers' union.

From Michigan the presidential party was scheduled to visit Knoxville, Tennessee, then head for Los Angeles and a guided tour as guests of R. L. Minckler, president of General Petroleum Company, to show Diem and Quang how oil is produced. In Los Angeles the big banquet was staged by the Los Angeles World Affairs Council in the California Club with executive director of the council, Walter P. Coombs, presiding.

The boys hoodwinking America shook hands all around and called it a job well-done when the sixteen-day Diem circus ended. Why not repeat it in Asia, they asked. Accordingly, in mid-August, with U. S. Information Service issuing glowing communiques like a press agency and USIS-subsidized papers printing them. Diem descended on Bangkok, Thailand, where no protective censorship existed and where Diem himself was so hated that Thai pressmen were frisked for revolvers before being permitted into his press conferences. Thailand's premier, Pibul Songgram, tried valiantly to go through with it, but even American Darrel Berrigen's Bangkok World was forced to announce on August 19 that Pibul had at the last minute backed out of accompanying his embarrassing guest on a jaunt

to Thailand's ancient capital. The premier was playing it cautious and taking his distance.

If dollars and adroit manipulation of mass communications media could not sell Asiatics on America's man, Diem's Far East junkets, costly as they were to the American taxpayer, were still not a total loss. The Diem machine in America could tell Americans that Diem's every trip—Bangkok, Manila, Formosa—was a triumph. An honest reporter who knew what he was doing might not be able to get his story in print, but a Los Angeles writer named Polyzoides had no trouble in using the powerful Los Angeles Times to diffuse any fool thesis he wished to circulate. "End of Civil War in Sight in Vietnam," Polyzoides told his readers.

Meanwhile back in Saigon Nhu and his wife counted the haul from confiscating Bao Dai's property and looked around to see what else they could seize. And the Communists stuck to their knitting, plugging along in the villages and rice paddies, grabbing a supply of arms here and taking over another local administration there. As long as initiative remained with them, time could not help but be on their side.

The tragic part of it was, as though Diem and Nhu and every American agent who knew what was going on consciously wished for a Communist victory, a monster police machine in South Vietnam clapped a heavy hand over the mouth of every man who would cry the alarm. On December 8, 1963, the New York Times published a report by Hedrick Smith, stating that Saigon was no longer cringing from a state of terror. "Arrests have been publicized and the treatment of political prisoners is far more humane than under the Diem regime which had 18 different security apparatuses seizing people at any hour of day or night," wrote Hedrick Smith. The question is, why did the New York Times lower a blackout on this state of affairs for nine years when reporting might have saved Southeast Asia? Having been lied to for nine years, is it any wonder that the American public refused to believe the truth when the New York Times could no longer avoid facing the facts?

Vo Lang, the deputy ambassador whom Diem's brother Luyen had rushed to Washington in April 1955, struggled with his conscience for six years, then wrote letters to Senators Mansfield and Humphrey and everyone else he had met when on the Diem bandwagon, begging them to do a volte face and help save his country. Desperate, with tears in his eyes and talking about suicide, he decided as a last resort to get in touch with Joseph Ballentine, the retired foreign service man who had so impressed him when they met in Washington. It was no

use: Mr. Ballentine's wife was the daughter of the American poet, Robert Frost, of whom Leo Cheme, an amateur sculptor as well as Diem propagandist, had just made a bust.

Madame Lecomte de Nouy indignantly exclaimed, when told of the use of torture on Diem's non-Communist opposition, "It's a lie! The head of Diem's surete translated my husband's books and I know he wouldn't do anything like that!" Mrs. Clochette P. . . , wife of a Columbia University professor, cancelled a tea appointment on November 9, 1956, because she knew the subject of Ngo dinh Diem was coming up. Her excuse, "I've worked hard for President Diem and it upsets me to hear bad things about him. Besides, this man [the other guest] comes from France, so I distrust him."

Madame Suzanne Labin wrote in the Washington World of July 24, 1962, (Karl Hess was then editor), “Nothing indeed could justify a revolt of the masses in South Vietnam. Anyone wandering around the country, as I have done several times, can testify to a miraculous improvement.” What editors and Senator Dodd overlooked was that in police states, when a touring woman is preceded by a request from the top to show her every courtesy, opponents of the team in power get the message, “This is an apologist for the President. Be careful what you say if you don’t want to end up in a camp.”

Madame Labin wrote exultantly in the Paris daily Combat, of April 14, 1960, “During my passage through Saigon I found the official address of the leader of the Socialist Party in the telephone book, and listed as such. I’d give a great deal to see in the phone book of Hanoi Mr. X, listed as secretary of the Liberal Party, that one might telephone him and be invited to lunch with him in a public place and that, over dessert, he might lift his glass to the coming unseating of the president in power, as did my comrade of the S. F. I. O. [French section of the International Workers, which is the French Socalist party] in Saigon,” What she ignored was that the socialist she called comrade, though permitted to have his name in the phone book and to drink to victory in the coming elections with a comrade from France, was not permitted to run against Diem in that election, nor was anyone else but the two unknowns whom Diem himself chose as opponents. It is also interesting to note that she was willing to condone a toast to Diem’s downfall provided her socialist comrade were to do the ousting.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE POLICE STATE AMERICA SUPPORTED

How astute It was of the American team, whether motivated by devotion to liberalism or working purely and simply for money, to take the precaution of discrediting in advance as an embittered colonialist every French writer and statesman who might have proved embarrassing. Jean Larteguy, author of The Centurions, and some half dozen books on South Vietnam, could have taught us much, but the language barrier and the campaign of Diem defense through francophobia discouraged anyone who might have published his writings.

In a short article in Paris Match of September 14, 1963, Larteguy recalled, “I remember Ngo dinh Diem as a small man dressed in white, immobile of face, with eyes of anthracite, holding himself on the edge of a

sofa, his fat little hands crossed over his stomach. He listened to only what he wanted to hear, he did only what pleased him, he had confidence only in his family and his god—a fanatical god of the Middle Ages, cruel, respectful of the social hierarchy. When I tried to irritate him he ceased to receive me. It was a period of crisis. I asked him for a statement and he gave me one, then denied it on the advice of his brother."

Concerning the government of this man, Larteguy wrote, "Lansdale, one of the king-makers of the American secret service, went to work to try to give him [Diem] the appearance of a democratic Chief of State. He gritted his teeth. Diem refused to understand; with bad grace he made a few demagogic gestures and proceeded to eliminate by ruse all his opponents . . . Diem—but should we say Diem?—rather the Ngo dinhs, for one never knew for sure who was in command and doing the deciding in the clan—purged half the army, covered the other with honors, and created a remarkable political police which had nothing to envy the Vietminh. A sort of 'tonton macoute' militia [the political police of Duvalier in Haiti], a little less unbridled but with methods more secret and more effective. Recruitment was easy. Refugees from the North, Christians, also, but from another age, whom their trials had hardened and who felt that they had been betrayed by the

French. Ambitious young bureaucrats, often xenophobes, proteges of the Ngo dinh family—disillusioned functionaries or men acting through fear, and some fervent nationalists, these formed the framework of the country."

To the above add a hard core of converts, true or false, from the Vietminh, and we have the makings of a police machine that was to be the downfall of the Ngo dinhs and the shame of America. There were many components. To start with, there were the followers of Madame Nhu.

"Behind each demonstration of police force," wrote the political editor of Paris Match, "rises the shadowed profile of the smiling and implacable Madame Nhu."

"I and my husband were the powers behind President Diem; without us he was nothing," exclaimed this oriental Passionaria who described herself in the August 31, 1963, issue of Paris Match as an "unloved Joan of Arc," in the last days of the Diem regime, as she and her husband openly

contemplated seizing power. If she were unloved, the power of which she boasted could only have been based on hate and force.

Two hundred thousand women were enrolled in Madame Nhu's paramilitary organization. Her own party, The Vietnamese Women's Solidarity Movement claimed almost a million members by the time Diem fell. Its main purpose was to mobilize women to provide accurate political intelligence for their leader, and beyond her, her husband and brother-in-law. A nationwide paramilitary training program was set up for all of Madame Nhu's followers from age sixteen to forty. When critics protested that two thousand piastres per month pay for Madame Nhu's women's militia was exorbitant when Vietnamese soldiers risking their lives daily in swamps received half as much, Madame Nhu replied, "My women cadre members are officers." Brand new U. S. carbines went to the women's militia (referred to by Madame Nhu as "my darlings") while local militia guarded exposed strategic hamlets with 1917 rifles.

Aside from keeping the enthusiasm of Madame Nhu's "darlings at fever pitch for informing on their neighbors, what did their drilling and parading do that might justify the money, arms and effort expended? In the fight against Communism, nothing. But their weight was there, scowling, armed and everpresent, a constant weapon of fear against real or fancied opponents. When hatred of Dr. Tran kirn Tuyen, head of the governmental secret police apparatus, made him a liability Jeters* he was sent off as ambassador to the United Arab Republic. Madame Nhu's brother, Tran van Khiem,

replaced him and Madame Nhu's power increased. A wave of arrests of lawyers, former cabinet members and respected citizens followed, for no other reason than to intensify the fear of those still free.

Madame Nhu's personal female army was not the only women's force. Women were also recruited and given military training and duties in her husband's blue-uniformed Cong-Hoa (Republican Youth). These were Vietnam's "gun-girls," wearing tight slacks, tight blouses and Colt-45s, strapped to their hips. Aside from providing a source of easily obtained American equipment for the Vietcong, the only service the Cong-Hoa performed was to add the weight of one more oppressive organization to the load the people of South Vietnam were already bearing.

Nhu's force was not limited to his blue-uniformed Republican Youth either. After them came the secret police of the Can-Lao-Nhan-Vi

(Humanist Workers' Revolutionary Party), then his own army, which included three armored car companies armed with fifty-caliber machine guns. Nhu's "special forces" battalions numbered 1,200 men in Saigon alone and included two groups dressed in civilian clothes, armed with knives, pistols and grenades for fighting in the streets.

What a pile of tiers of police upon police we supported in the end! Madame Nhu's women's militia reporting every scrap of unfavorable conversation, Nhu's Republican Youth and his Can-Lao-Nhan-Vi party with swarming spies and informers vying with each other to prove their loyalty by denouncing someone else; Diem's army officered by men promoted not for ability but for loyalty to Diem; a 50,000-man civil guard, and an American-trained and equipped police!

Nhu told Joe Alsop (Alsop's column of September 20,1963, "In the Gia Long Palace"), "Even if you Americans pull out I will still win the war here at the head of the great guerrilla movement which I have prepared." That guerrilla force, unhappily, was directed not against the Communist North but against the non-Communist opposition. "No one in this country has any ideas except me," said Nhu, the man whom Alsop had lauded, protected and sold to America for nine long years, and who never became the megalomaniac overnight that Alsop admitted him to be in September of 1963.

Nhu's method of operating was not admitted by our government either until mid-1963, when the explosion was imminent. Not until September 6, 1963, did Time tell its readers, that members of "Nhu's Republican Youth Organization made door-to-door calls, warning against public criticism of the

government on pain of arrest." The picture evoked in the Vietnamese by the threat of arrest for even the mildest criticism was never brought home in all its horror to the American public. Saville R. Davis wrote a piece on it in the Christian Science Monitor of January 10, 1956, but that was one unfavorable report against the hundreds that were reassuring. There was no American reaction when Davis gave America the following account:

"Three weeks ago," said a personal friend, a Vietnamese whom I had known elsewhere and whom I knew to be a man of integrity, "my cousin was arrested." He is a newspaperman, a moderate nationalist and in no sense either a Communist or pro-Communist. His political views are fairly widely known.

“It was a classic arrest. The police came at three o’clock in the morning, two truckloads of them. They came into my cousin’s house with riot guns pointed. They took his radio and typewriter and said these were enough to incriminate him.

“He is suffering from an illness which would make prison dangerous, so I went to the police. They said nothing could be done. I went to an adviser of President Ngo dinh Diem, and he said this was not something he could help with. I wrote President Diem himself, whom I have known quite well personally, and there has been no answer.

Wife Rebuffed Too

“My cousin’s wife went to the police and pleaded because of her husband’s health. They said to her, ‘If you cause trouble, we will arrest you, too.’ Since she had four children to take care of, she left.

“A lawyer was sent to him and denied admittance. There are courts, but none of them will touch a political case like this. There is no habeas corpus.

“There is complete censorship in the newspapers, so news of a case like this cannot be spread around. There is no legal opposition to the Diem government, so no one can raise a question, so to speak, in parliament.”

I talked to another Vietnamese who also happened by co

incidence to be a newspaperman. At least he was trained and wanted to be one.

“But I cannot,” he said. “I have written articles but the moment the slightest questioning of the government comes in, the censor takes it out. We are in that fawning stage now where adulation of President Diem is required in almost every article. This is not journalism, so I have another job.”

Security Job Difficult

“Sure there are political prisoners,” said a knowledgeable American. “You must remember that some of the nationalists are in open rebellion against the regime and the security job is a difficult one and the police in crude circumstances like this cannot be expected to discriminate.”

A larger perspective came from a generally respected Vietnamese opposition leader who is out of a job because there is no provision for parties outside the ruling group.

“The most serious mistake of President Diem,” he said, “is to crack down so hard on those nationalist groups which are not Communist and which are frustrated by his dictatorship. His strategy is pushing them over

into the other camp. If we continue with a tight dictatorship like this, the word will get around the country that things under Diem are not much better than things under the French, and then Ho chi Minh (President of Communist North Vietnam) and his fifth column will have another real wave of popular discontent to exploit."

So ended the Saville Davis report on Diem's police state.

Louis Kraar, in a lengthy 1961 report to the Wall Street Journal, when the truth began to come out, wrote that within three weeks of an order directing all civil servants under thirtyfive to join Nhu's Republican Youth, all one could see was blue uniforms, though some villages had to do without other things to buy them. Operators from Diem's new public relations firm (Kastor, Chesley, Clifford & Atherton, which succeeded Harold Oram), according to Kraar, "screen correspondents before letting them see government officials, report newsmen's private conversations to Vietnam's government [emphasis ours] and badger reporters who suggest that the country is not ideally administered." Everywhere the heavy

hand of secret police and informers, no few of them American, was present.

In 1959, in search of a specialist to train "combat police," Diem and Nhu recruited Deputy Police Chief Frank Walton, of Los Angeles. To quote the Los Angeles Times of July 6,' 1959, "Walton will report to Washington this week for a period of indoctrination in the International Co-operation Administration program, then he will go to Vietnam to serve as public safety adviser to the chief of the national police forcer (emphasis ours)

As early as December 5, 1956, Jim G. Lucas wrote of Saigon, in the New York World Telegram & Sun, 'This is a city in which the secret police are active—worse than under the French. As a trainer of said police, there was still another American "adviser" besides Frank Walton, a police officer named Cole sent to Saigon by Michigan State University; and readers of the New York Times of March 15, 1957, could have learned, if they had wished, that Mr. Cole's wife, Peggy, was Saigon representative of the International Rescue Committee. So in Saigon, where an anti-Communist was rotting in prison for every anti-Communist incarcerated in Budapest, the wife of an American who was hired to help Diem and Nhu swell their prisons was employed as paid representative of a committee boasting of what it had done for anti-Communists in Hungary. The fact that American aid provided $1.5 million for police radio equipment, and more millions for

Michigan State's police training program and advisors to put teeth in the police apparatus of a country where Communists were gaining power by the week and only Diem's personal enemies appeared to suffer, never gave pause to our editors or congressmen. The fact that the "ex-pirates" we boasted of ousting from the control of the Saigon police had really beaten the Communists, we ignored as blissfully as we did another unpleasant fact: When the French were fighting Ho chi Minh, Diem's pleas that we should not help them because, though they were fighting the Communists, they were also fighting the people, made sense to Time magazine. It never entered Henry Luce's head that it was unwise for America to identify herself with Diem s police machine, which arrested Communists from time to time but concerned itself mainly with fighting people who did not want Diem.

Beyond the obvious police machines were more sinister organizations. Albert Colegrove, in his article, "We aren't building much Democracy in Vietnam," told Washingon in the Washington News of July 25, 1959, "You don't, if you're a

foreign tourist or an American newsman here on a wellescorted 48-hour visit, or a U. S. Government employee toiling in a Saigon office, see the prison and concentration camps— and, as a matter of fact, neither did I. But I talked secretly with Vietnamese who had. You don't see the 'Political Reeducation Centers' where the milder dissidents are given enforced tutoring in the Free Vietnam brand of 'democracy.' And one of these I did see—the only American who ever wangled that privilege. Information Minister Tran chanh Thanh who defected from the communist Vietminh in 1952 is, among other things, the boss of these centers." The four prisoners Colegrove selected to interview in the camp he visited had been there from eight months to two years, along with four-hundred others, including eighty women, some with babies and small children.

Colegrove estimated that at least sixteen-thousand people were in Tran chanh Than's thirty-nine known "reeducation centers." Diem's new law setting up military courts in three Vietnamese cities to deal with "anti-government" action, Mr. Colegrove found, included any expression of criticism, down to "shaking a fist in the general direction of the Presidential Palace." The three courts "have absolute power to seize and try suspects, hand down a verdict, and carry out the sentence in three days. Only three

verdicts are provided: Not guilty, life imprisonment or death," wrote Mr. Colegrove.

The State Department's reaction was a vicious attempt to discredit Colegrove. And up to the time Diem himself found the muzzle of a gun pointed at his head, anyone in America who dared observe that there was not a family in Vietnam, save perhaps those at the trough, which did not have good reason to pull the trigger, brought a storm down on his head. Not till the lid blew sky high was the American public given a glimpse of the treatment of what Colegrove called "the untold thousands in concentration camps."

Malcom W. Browne, in an AP report in the Shreveport Times and other American papers on November 9, 1963, told of Vietnamese streaming out of Diem's camps with stories of torture on naked bodies, of blinding and mutilations. Miss Hoang thi Dong, a twenty-nine-year-old typist employed in the British embassy, told Browne of fingers chopped off and prisoners forced to drink soapy water till their intestines streamed blood.

Georges Chaffard observed in Le Monde (Paris, January 4, 1957) that the discontent aroused in every layer of the population served the propaganda interests of the Vietminh. Chaffard

reflected that anyone not in agreement with Diem is, as far as Diem and the Americans are concerned, a Communist. The "intergroup" organizations, in which families informed on themselves and each other, the heavy administrative political and police nets headed by men who had been themselves Vietminli terrorists—Chaffard asked himself if all these crushing organizations "were not a machiavellian plan devised by Hanoi to infiltrate the South through playing on Diem's fears and credulity. For nowhere did the enticing prospect of using Communist methods to beat the enemy at his own game bring the desired results."

John Osborne conceded in "The Tough Miracle Man of Vietnam," in Life of May 13, 1957, that "the whole machinery of security has been used to discourage active opposition of any kind from any source." Tran chanh Thanh, Ho chi Minh's former overlord, Osborne continued "directs the re-education centers where thousands of dissenters get short enforced courses in Thanh's version of democracy, and he estimated last year that 15,000 to 20,000 people had been detained for political reasons since 1954." Osborne added, "A propaganda and political front called the Movement for National Revolution (MNR) has cells at various levels in every national ministry and

every provincial organization and is being extended to every town and village. Corollary organizations of women, youth, peasants and workmen strive to permeate the easy-going Vietnamese."

Tran chanh Thanh, whom Osborne described as the "black beast of the Diem regime," and of whom Osborne said, "All he knows are the methods that he saw work with the Vietminh," ran Diem's political movement, in conjunction with Diem's brothers, Nhu and Can. "Behind the facade of photographs, flags and slogans, there is a grim structure of decrees, political prisons, concentration camps, milder 're-education centers,' secret police," John Osborne told Life readers, May 13, 1957. "Ordinance No. 6, signed and issued by Diem in January 1956, provides that "individuals considered dangerous to national defense and common security" may be confined by executive ordet in "a concentration camp" or "obliged to reside under police surveillance in a fixed place."

"The national army, the civil guard or national police, local police and the Sixth Bureau—a formation of secret military police—enforce this and similai measures with strict and often arbitrary rigor. Only known or suspected communists who have threatened or violated public security since July 1954 [emphasis ours] are supposed to be arrested and 're-educated'

under these decrees. But many non-communists have also been detained."

Time, of April 14, 1961, reported, "Some overly suspicious army commanders make recruits for the Viet Cong by indiscriminately jailing villagers. One colonel taking over a new post found 1,500 people in jail and discovered that there was not a shred of evidence against 1,200 of them." But what of the special military courts that had been empowered to seize, try and condemn suspects, with sentences carried out within three days and only "not guilty, life imprisonment and death verdicts" permitted? How many innocent men had been taken out and shot in such camps with no one out their friends and families knowing of their fate?

American liberals, who assail all parading, swaggering private armies and police as reminders of Hitler and Mussolini, found nothing wrong with the bands formed by Nhu and his wife. Like Hitler's, these bands were composed of men and women out for money, power and perquisites. In every crisis their brutality mcreased out of fear of the score-settling oy those whom they nad terrorized, were Diem and Nhu to fall.

in his phobia about criticism and security, Diem was maneuvered into seeing his brother and sister-in-law as his mainstays. “His (Diem’sj followers were killed oy Communists and our followers saved him,” Madame Nhu explained to all who would listen, as quoted by the New York Herald Tribune (European edition), August 27, 1963. “Without his family he [Diem] stands alone. The women follow me and my husband has his Youth Movement. The Catholics take orders from Archbishop Thuc.”

Thuc and Diem pushed their projects for mobilizing groups as such and playing them against each other to the point of planning Catholic parish militias extending over all of Vietnam. Gerard Periot, the writer covering Catholic Affairs for Paris Match, wrote on August 31, 1963, that notes had been sent to all priests requesting them to recruit and arm militias in their parishes. Only three priests agreed, so great was the apprehension that Diem’s use of the nation’s ten per cent Catholic minority in his political game would make them the ultimate of a civil war which could become a religious war after Diem’s fall. “Monsignor Thuc wished to hold an anticommunist meeting in Saigon,” wrote Periot. “Monsignor Binh, the archbishop of the capital, refused, saying, ‘If you are the master of the Hue diocese, l am the master of the diocese of Saigon and I am not going to let my cathedral become a headquarters for political meetings.”

Monsignor Binh was no weakling in his stand against communism; it was simply that in his eyes Monsignor Thuc was not fighting communism but using the Communist threat to politick for his family.

Undaunted, Diem and Nhu then decided to rid themselves of the troublesome Dai Viet party, the nationalists who had never accepted them. At the same time they planned to “Vietnamize” the mountain tribesmen of the High Plateau. For a hundred years the French had protected the montagnards, as they were called, against the Vietnamese of the lowlands. Diem decided to inundate them by forcibly transporting those Dai Viet members whom he considered threats to himself to the High Plateau, an area twice as large as Switzerland, extending from the frontier of North Vietnam to the plains of Cochin China in the South.

It was a monster police operation, unjust and handled in the worst manner of the old mandarins. The 600,000 montagnards saw the 200,000 political exiles being brought to Diem’s “Siberia” not as fellow victims but as the first wave of a horde meant to take their lands and exterminate them. As potential enemies of the regime were forcibly transplanted and other

sections of the High Plateau were turned into model villages for Catholic refugees, hate smouldered among the montagnards against the authors of the whole plan.

Wherever there was hatred of Diem the Vietcong swung into action, discreetly at first, according to the Tong Bo's timetried "long war" methods. Every abuse by Diem favored the Vietcong. Appeals to revolt alternated with terrorism. The nighttime tribunals of the Vietcong spread, judging and executing minor functionaries, village heads, government administrators down to the smallest communities. The government replied to Vietcong terrorism with secret police and zealous "patriotic organizations" denouncing citizens whom the government was powerless to protect from the Vietcong but ready to imprison if they made the slightest accommodation to save their skins.

Life in the villages became impossible. Slowly at first, then in droves, whole families migrated to Saigon, preferring to die of hunger rather than with a bullet in the head. In Saigon governmental police proved as pitiless as the Reds. By June of 1959 veritable oil spots, called "free regions" by the Communists, cast their stain across the country and continued to spread. Red flags, loud speakers, slogans and administrations were openly installed.

Establishment of these "liberated regions" was exceedingly

simple. First a Vietcong unit would move into a village at night, set up a court and try and execute the local administrator and all his aides, under the eyes of their fellow citizens. Automatically the village became not only converted but "loyal." The next move was to confiscate identity cards issued by the Diem government. Communist agents used them as passes and the poor nha-que of the countryside, deprived of his card of identity, had no alternative but to become a Vietcong. The national army with its American equipment was too cumbersome for night chases through the rice paddies, even if so inclined.

So Nhu got his next brain wave: the aggrovilles, or strategic hamlets, as we called them. "If he [Diem] bows to 'American pressures' and retires from the scene even for a few months," Joe Alsop quoted Nhu as saying, in the famous Alsop column of September 20, 1963, "The whole strategic hamlet program will collapse, for I alone am the inspiration of the young fighters who defend the hamlets." A word is needed here on these hamlets which were at once villages fortified, presumably against the Reds, and concentration camps encasing the population for the Ngo dinhs.

Overnight the propaganda machine took off on its latest kick. Before they were even tried, strategic hamlets were hailed as a great success, and anyone who talked sense was denounced as being "on the Communist team." Ever since the beginning of America's "sink or swim with Diem" experiment, as New York Times' Homer Bigart called it, our press, State Department, USIS and self-appointed authorities, such as Lederer and Burdick of The Ugly American fame, had never ceased to parrot the self-satisfying claim that the French lost because they used World War II methods in a subversive war. The truth of the matter is, the ingenuity with which individual officers met and coped with Vietminh methods was astounding; and if the Pentagon and USIS (Saigon headquarters of which was referred to as "the temple of self-extollers") would translate and study Lucien Bodard's book, La Guerre d'lndo-China L' Enlisement, as a manual, they would learn a lot.

The Saturday Evening Post of November 24, 1962, carried a story by Harold Martin which was typical. Martin sneered at the French guard towers as hangovers from a "fortification concept" that in eight years of bloody fighting cost France the whole of Indochina. "The 'Old Stockade Idea' Works," proclaimed Martin. Hamlets were ringed by fences of sharpened bamboo stakes, protected by a moat and barbed wire.

"Now the Cong can't just walk in and take what they want." Martin quoted an American as saying triumphantly.

In reality "strategic hamlet" was the French fortification concept on a bigger scale. Instead of locking a small force in a guard-tower at night, Nhu and his do-it-big assistants locked up whole villages. When a guard tower fell it was usually through a traitor on the inside. By fortifying whole hamlets Nhu enlarged the "tower" and increased the possibility of treachery; that was all. Villagers who resented doing work for which they were not paid were harassed by Nhu's police. Vietcong spies and infiltrators found it easier to undermine a stockaded village than a guard tower, and when a stockaded village fell the arms haul was correspondingly bigger.

The tragic stories were legion. A dying Vietnamese found near the ammunition cases when Plei Mrong was attacked murmured, "Me Vietcong No. 1." Charged with distributing ammunition to the defenders, he had armed his own men. Nearly 175 Jarai tribesmen had been recruited to defend the hamlet. Eleven elected to settle their scores with Saigon by

helping the Vietcong. The night of the attack an infiltrator put the hamlet's mortar out of commission while another cut a passage through the barbed wire. The first attack was directed toward the Jarai recruits, who took shelter in a trench. There they were cut down one by one. A sack full of the hands of Jarai volunteers was later found near an entry to the camp.

In another hamlet a message being sent from a woman on the inside to her husband with the Vietcong was intercepted. "Do not worry about us," she wrote. "The children and I are being taken care of." How many Vietcong terrorists were relieved of family responsibilities by stockade-enthusiastic Americans we shall never know. "South Vietnam rounds up critics of the regime," announced the Indianapolis Star of September 4, 1962, and from that belated admission of special shock-police and arbitrary arrests emerged another picture of what we not only condoned but financed.

One of the first honest reports to reach the American public was David Hotham's article in the New Republic of November 25, 1957; but here again Americans who should have heeded rejected the warning because it was unpleasant and because the New Republic had printed it. Hotham had been in Saigon for three years as British correspondent for the London Times and the Economist. On his way home by boat he summed up his observations; and carefully, in understatement if anything, wrote that America was losing the southern half of Indochina just as France had lost the northern. "It

has been possible for Western propaganda to portray it [South Vietnam] as stable by drawing over the confused whirlpool of its internal ferment a massive but discreet curtain of dollars and misleading publicity," Hotham warned. Diem's use of his "police to squelch the anti-Communist intellectual opposition," Hotham branded an imbecility. "What is extraordinary is that these incredible mistakes of policy [Hotham listed them] have been represented by Western publicity services as successes of the regime. In fact they have annihilated the forces of antiCommunist nationalism."

Hotham's lucid portrayal of the ugliness of Diem's power should have been carefully studied. Sixty-four per cent of the $770 million (admitted) poured into the country since 1954 went to pay the wages of the "feudal" army of the Ngo dinhs, which replaced, and inefficiently at that, the ferocious antiCommunist armies of the Binh Xuyen and the sects which we reviled because they were "feudal." What security did Diem's private forces

provide? Against the Communists, none, said Hotham. “Since the defeat of the sects in 1955, Diem’s army and police have been notorious for their activities in the villages—widespread arrests and imprisonment without evidence and without trial of persons suspected of being Communists or ‘enemies of the state.’ According to reliable sources, about 14,000 persons were arrested in Annam alone at the time of the March 1956, elections. Since then the process has, according to all reports, increased rather than diminished. Far from giving security, there is every reason to suppose that the army, buttressed by the Civil Guard (a sort of rural police of 50,000 men), is regarded by the southern peasant as a symbol of insecurity and repression.”

This article, one of the best the author has seen on our South Vietnam experiment, Hotham sent to an American literary agent whose name had been given him. Editor after editor turned it down. At last, rather than write it off as a total loss, Hotham, who knew nothing of conservative thinking in America, accepted a check for seventy-five dollars from his agent, who sold the piece to the New Republic. Then the public which gave him no other choice condemned Hotham for being in theNew Republic. This is the story of most attempts to tell America the truth about South Vietnam.

Beyond the obvious networks with their overlapping layers of informers were apparatuses Americans in their busy offices ignored. When forced to face the spectre of what they were financing and protecting, whole agencies reacted as a single man. An outlash of blind hate against the monster “working

against America” followed, and a torrent of vicious reports flew Washington-ward, to repose in government files which only those out to block the offender’s passport and destroy his reputation would ever see. No one, therefore, would ever refute them.

Beneath the visible police-state machinery was the Cong Dan Vu, ostensibly formed to protect the country against Communists, but often referred to as a ‘Trojan horse.” Its headquarters was at the airport from which Diem and his family would presumably flee, if they ever had to leave the country. No one else would be able to get near the airport, in the event of a crisis, but, for that matter, no one would have a passport nor any Formosa to go to, so it would not matter. No one believed the men of the

Cong Dan Vu would have to flee, but the CDV was as ideally situated to prevent a getaway as to assure one. As early as September 1958 this author wrote in an article published by American Mercury that the Cong Dan Vu would never let Diem and his family escape.

A man named Kieu cong Cung, who had once been Ho chi Minh's chief of state, headed the Cong Dan Vu. Ho chi Minh sent him north in 1946. Then Cung returned to the South to get in touch with Ngo dinh Nhu one month before the Geneva accord of 1954, bringing with him his own lieutenants, old Communist comrades in arms from central Vietnam. Cung's fellow Communist officer, Albert Pham ngoc Thao, who had been Ho chi Minh's intelligence chief in the south, was worming his way into the family teams being organized by Nhu and Thuc, while Diem waited in Europe for American supporters to force him on Bao Dai and the French. Cung and Thao adroitly denounced as Communists any southerners who got in their way, so the next thing Saigon anti-Communists knew, their former implacable enemies, Albert Pham ngoc Thao and Kieu cong Cung, were running Nhu's intelligence setup and Diem's private gestapo, respectively. Cung was given special powers, making him answerable only to the president, and required to make no accounting to anybody. His budget, provided by American aid, was passed on to him directly by the secretary of state with no accounting to the finance minister. No one knew how much Cung spent or where it went.

The organization of the CDV was divided into three sections: intelligence, information and special police. Head of the intelligence section was Nguyen van Thuan, who had been Ho chi Minh's economic section chief after World War n. It was Thuan who built up the efficient black market and piastre traffic which made Ho's forces in the Saigon area self-support

ing. Along with intelligence, Thuan directed Diem's psychological warfare section which carried with it the right to arrest without warrant and hold without trial. The number of those taken into custody by Thuan and not seen again would seem to indicate that the right to execute without circumlocution or undue paper work was also included.

Since Tran chanh Thanh's information service and Thuan's dual networks overlapped, Vietnamese observing the close cooperation between Thanh's agency and U. S. Information Service concluded that USIS also straddled information and intelligence for America.

All of the men in Diem's special branches were handpicked, which did not mean that they were not Communist infiltrators. No matter how many concentric protective rings he drew around him, Diem still felt insecure. As provocation for hatred increased. Diem's distrust of associates and subordinates and the people at large spread downward and outward. Suspicion, manifesting itself by alternate rages and periods of brooding silence, hesitance followed by ruthless repressions, tormented his days. Escape from haunting fear became a necessity, until, despite the great political and social gulf between them, Diem became no different from Ho chi Minh and Nguyen Binh and Ho's other satraps who executed and imprisoned right and left for thoughts they imagined those around them were concealing in their minds. The man hawked from one end of America to the other for his high morality became a facade of simplicity and purity behind which worked all the forces of evil.

More groups, more ever-widening rings, each more carefully selected (and sometimes better paid) than the last, were organized and kept ignorant (so Diem thought) of each other. In reality they worked together in perfect teamwork to play upon his fears, for at the head of each ring was an experienced revolutionary who, a few months or years before, had worked in the same capacity under Ho chi Minh.

Clement Johnston, head of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, in his 1957 special report to Congress on America's accomplishments in Vietnam, said, "What has been accomplished by the Michigan State University team with the police force is being undertaken in other Government departments by public administration technicians from the same institution, with agreeable but less spectacular results."

How spectacular these results were the American people were to learn six years later. "Control of the army is a convenient and effective means of protecting political tenure," Mr.

Johnston also told the committee. One year later State Department testimony before Congress estimated that 38,000 political prisoners were in Vietnam's camps and prisons. And this was before the fierce outbreak of guerrilla fighting provided a pretext for such measures. Mixed together in Diem's prison camps were all the makings of the sort of Communist university that trained Nguyen Binh and thousands of other subversives in countries that have since fallen to the Reds.

Why so many estimates gave 30,000 to 38,000 as the number languishing in the camps set up by Diem, Nhu and Can, is hard to explain, unless the 500,000 often given by Diem's opposition seemed too high and anything less than 30,000 was obviously untrue. On June 17, 1960, three and a half lines in Paris's Figaro announced that six hundred political prisoners had been released from Vietnamese prison camps after promising to break with the Communist party. Thus six hundred embittered graduates went out as "professors" from the hardest schools on earth, while non-Communists by the thousands were hauled in for indoctrination. What a heyday the Communists had with the ammunition "our man" was giving them.

On January 20, 1959, General Vo nguyen Giap, the national defense minister and vice-president of Communist North Vietnam, launched a press attack claiming that Diem's police had killed over a thousand political prisoners in a single day in the Phu-Loi concentration camp, about four miles from the principal village in Thu-Dau-Mot province. As reported in Le Monde of January 21, 1959, between 5,000 and 6,000 political prisoners, many of them non-Communist, were in the Phu-Loi camp. After their noon meal on December 1,1958, they started dying. Some say several hundred succumbed; others set the figure at over a thousand. There was no way of knowing, under the strict censorship in force. Next day the survivors staged a riot. A fire, believed caused by guards firing on the panicstricken inmates, increased the number of victims.

Whether the poisoning was due to bad food purchased by officials trying to graft, or Diem officers getting rid of troublesome charges, is hard to say. More important, it provided propaganda ammunition for the Reds and fanned the South's apprehensions. A feeling that no one was safe existed on every level, and the example of what happened at Dai-Loc was never forgotten. At Dai-Loc 360 "reformed" Communists were released in the nearby farming area on their oath that they had turned over a new leaf and would help clean up the country. Within four months they denounced and sent to concentration camps over a thousand farmers as "Communist agents." An

other 160 were either locked up or severely beaten. (Pacific Affairs, vol. XXXI, no. 3, September 1958)

This was the climate in which the hapless residents of "America's Showcase for Democracy" lived. By the very ease with which the enemy assassinated village heads who did not cooperate, it should have been obvious to an intelligent American bureaucracy that village chiefs who lived were village chiefs who were Ho chi Minh administrators by night and who, if they denounced anyone by day, denounced only enemies of Ho chi Minh.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
PRICE TAG FOR DISASTER

How much did all this cost the American taxpayer? Unfortunately, we shall never know. What about the claim that no matter what happens, eighty percent of all American aid comes back to America in the form of purchases? The truth

is, the bookkeeping which presents eighty percent of foreign aid as coming back to America in purchases is a swindle. Such exports are not sales abroad; they are forced purchases by the American taxpayer of something he does not want and does not get. The material he is forced to buy, though he never sees it, goes to some native with a place at the faucet somewhere on the other side of the world. True, the American manufacturer makes a profit. His taxes are higher because of

it, but the cost is spread over the American taxpaying body as a whole. The many manufacturers are willing to carry on, on that basis, until eternity if they and their congressmen can put it over. The question is, can America afford it? And does any country have a right to milk its citizens by making them buy products for someone else?

The high-sounding term that the economic wizards in Washington gave this swindle is "counterpart financing." We prevent inflation in recipient countries, they proudly told the taxpayer, by bringing eighty-five percent of our aid allotments in the form of consumer foods and only fifteen percent in funds. The consumer goods are purchased on the local foreign market and the funds therefrom are used to meet the needs of the foreign government receiving such "aid." The International Cooperation Agency called this "generating local currency." What it meant in a country where corruption is considered a fine art and American agencies covered up the corruption, is that the government could print bank notes as fast as it wished, and American exports provided the backing. The notes had no gold, silver, nor any other reserve behind them; but since they could buy American tape

recorders, hi-fi radios, food, textiles, shiny new automobiles, and other luxury items, the fiction was maintained that eighty percent of foreign

aid returned to America, and Vietnam's currency went on a tape recorder, hi-fi radio, and luxury-gadget standard.

Firms with an inside track grew fat on this deal, and their agents in Saigon made a killing. In Vietnam, as in all countries on American-generated currency, the native purchaser's willingness to buy was unlimited. Ability to buy was another matter. The per capita income was estimated at around $130 per year with most of the purchasing power in the hands of the army, whose pay scale, Pacific Affairs of September 1958, admitted, was "among the highest in Asia and in some cases higher than those paid to troops in NATO." These, and civilian administrators in position to reach the trough, constituted the new, rich class the Diem government and our aid created. That their capacity to buy had a saturation point was soon demonstrated by the amount of goods piling up on Saigon shelves, priced lower than they cost in America.

Food and textile purchases in America ruined the native Vietnam textile industry. Rice imports in the form of unpublicized American aid were diverted in the native black market and sometimes reshipped as a source of foreign currency— this by the country that continued to export its rice throughout the Indochina war. Congressman Otto Passman (D., Louisiana) spearheaded an attack on waste and graft in American aid in June 1958, but tiny Laos, whose fleecing of the American contributor was piddling by comparison, was as close as he ventured to our "sacred cow" in South Vietnam.

Leland Barrows, our International Cooperation Agency chief in Saigon, in an interview published by the Washington Post of February 18, 1957, called Vietnam a "stable, peaceful nation. (In the Department of State Bulletin of May 11, 1959, Barrows again touted his program in an article covering American aid to South Vietnam since 1955.) Barrows, in 1957, stated that we were pouring only $320 million a year into South Vietnam. But this did not include the salaries and expenses of the 130 to 150 men working for ICA nor the sprawling United States Information Service spending most of its $750,000 to let President Diem's non-Communist opposition know that he had the weight of a great country, i. e., the United States, behind him.

The effort to entrench Diem rather than bolster South Vietnam was justified as a solid plan to preserve stability. It created the illusion of a surface calm. Since the USIS expenditure was to finance a Diem propaganda campaign rather than sell America, both it and its parallel operation to tell America that all was well in South Vietnam must rightly be included in the

balance of American aid to Diem. Copies of Time magazine totaling 1.8 million were distributed free in fifty-six countries by the USIS in 1958 as part of the American propaganda effort. To the extent of Time's perpetuation of the false picture in South Vietnam, the cost of that operation must be considered aid to the government of President Diem.

Life magazine of May 13, 1957 (the John Osborne report), put American aid in South Vietnam at $400 million yearly. The New York Herald Tribune of February 12, 1958, estimated it at “about $2,000,000,000 a year.” The truth is somewhere between the Leland Barrows figure and the Herald Tribune's.

Eighty percent of the Vietnamese national budget was admittedy paid by the United States through President Diem’s New York public relations office, and American Friends of Vietnam assured America that one of the miracles performed by “our man” was the successful shoring up of his national economy. By the above admission of eighty percent dependency on America, Vietnam could be said to be twenty percent independent, but the term “American aid” did not take into account the periodic “loans” absorbed by the Saigon government. On June 18, 1958, there was a $9,500,000 loan “to create an industrial development in the agricultural south.” (Whether the government, i. e., the president’s family, or private ownership, i. e., the president’s family, would control the development when finished, was unstated.) On July 13,

1958, there was a six million dollar loan for a telecommunication system.

These are only examples. The actual yearly figure is staggering. The Vietnamese Petroleum Company, launched in 1957, was investigated for a swindle involving some 100 million piastres. By the agreement signed on November 5, 1957, the United States government guaranteed all American loans and investments in South Vietnam. Since not a cent of such money

will ever return to America, there is no reason why the farce should be maintained that it is different from American aid or that anyone but the taxpayer will be the ultimate victim.

The fact that the Communists have not taken over has been touted as proof that America's sacrifices stopped the tide. They have, but not in the way we have been told. No Communist would be fool enough to kill the golden-egg-laying goose that was financing all the improvements he wanted. The U. S. Development Loan Fund was authorized on March 15,

1959, to advance $19,500,000 for the extension and moderni

zation of the Saigon-Cholon water system. Former Communist leader Tran le Quang, public works chief, inherited the project. It provided employment for his person^ following.

British correspondent David Hotham declared in both the London Times and the Economist that four-fifths of America's gigantic aid program had failed to contribute in any direct way to the well-being of the people, that the Americans who gave that unstinting aid were not liked and that the economic situation was rapidly deteriorating. That the Communists had done nothing, he insisted, was not because Diem was in power but rather. Diem was in power because the Communists had done nothing.

According to official estimates, sixty-four percent of American aid to Vietnam was going for military expenditures in 1957. This included a 150,000-man army in which the president had so little confidence that he used it as an outer ring of defense against his people. Within the ring he relied on a smaller circe of 45,000 civil guards, in which he had so little confidence he added a still closer enveloping ring of 15,000 picked police. Former Red leaders ran the police.

The explanation for Vietnamese army pay scales being among the highest in Asia and in some cases higher than those paid to NATO troops is simple: As a leader becomes hated his army's pay becomes not pay but bribery. $10,000 a day went to Nhu's special forces alone. Considering the cost of training, equipping and maintaining an unsure army on a pay scale necessary to keep them from deserting, it is doubtful that sixty-four percent of even $3 million a day could support the 210,000 men constantly on a campaign footing that Diem found necessary to prevent a nationalist revolt.

Meanwhile American aid financed the New York public relations firm and other propaganda organizations campaigning for continued American

aid in larger sums and for longer periods. As the campaign to condition the citizen for further levies on himself met with increasing resistance, the switch over to a cry for private investments gained momentum. It involved keeping another set of books but that was all. Lower aid figures were expected to cheer Americans at home. The Development Loan Fund grants replacing them passed unmentioned.

American aid was administered through the National Bank of South Vietnam by a former Communist official named Vu van Thai, it will be recalled. Working in conjunction with him as credit chief for said aid was Mr. Albert Pham ngoc Thao, who had been Communist leader Ho chi Minh's intelli

gence chief in Cochin China and whose brother was in Ho's government in Hanoi and whose father was president of the Vietminh (Communist) League in Paris. Why should Ho chi Minh be in any hurry to take over?

There was another form of American aid no less involuntary on the part of the contributor. Travelers passing through Saigon by boat or plane had to declare the American dollars and other currencies, and even the number of watches carried with them. When the declaration was signed, they were searched to see if banknotes in their billfolds exceeded the declaration. Most passing Americans felt that how many dollars they carried was their own affair and were haphazard about disclosing them. Not so the Vietnamese. Hauls of two and three thousand dollars per ship were not uncommon. Confiscation was based on the absurdity that the passenger planned to buy piastres on the black-market, or that he was slipping a watch past the customs to sell in the country. Where did this money go? Personal graft perhaps, but one never knows, with former Red officials running the police.

If admitted American handouts paid eighty percent of the expenses of the Diem government, contributions disguised as loans, foreign investments, welfare work and customs seizures could have equaled twenty percent of the admitted aid. This left other revenue available for graft, and America might in all honesty claim to have carried the country one hundred percent. The United Nations poured money into the country through a technical assistance program, under its own name, with the UN rather than America getting the credit. America, however, was on paper as paying sixty

percent of this expenditure and in reality probably paid around ninety-three percent.

Diem's family deposits were so heavy in France at the time Monsieur Pinay devaluated the franc in 1959 that negotiations were opened for improved trade only on the condition that the French government would make an adjustment on the 15% of Vietnamese wealth lost by devaluation. In other words, brother Nhu, on the government level, was willing to restore some of the trade taken by us from France if Monsieur Pinay would find a way to pay him as a private citizen a sum equalling 15% of his holdings and deposits in France as a commission.

Foreign Affairs Minister Pineau of France gave Diem a billion and a half francs when he visited Saigon in early

1958 and promised further French handouts. In November

1959 he followed with a fifteen-year loan of seven billion francs. West Germany and Japan made credits available, and Japan's war reparations ($39 million in reparations and $16

million in loans) were expedited to afford a trade outlet in Southeast Asia. The Colombo Plan, through which British and Australian cooperation was channeled, brought a constant stream of money from the pound sterling nations as part of their project for safeguarding Singapore and the Straits.

Yet there was never enough. The cry for more money and new forms under which to disguise it was constant. Where did it all go? Little if anything was done to industrialize the country. A watch assembly plant periodically opened and shut down. There were model refugee camps, nurseries, schools and wellstocked stores piled high with consumer goods that successfully screened the concentration camps and the terror. And there was the graft. It was everywhere. It made the president's sister-in-law and official hostess famous (or infamous) around the world, except in America.

Mr. Clement Johnston, chairman of the board of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, reported to the Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program, in 1957, that the usual pattern of government in Southeast Asia was a strong man and his associates buoyed by the indispensable American aid, with liberal crumbs from die table for loyal followers.

"The people of Vietnam," Mr. Johnston stated, "now are living by false standards under a 'phoney' inflated currency. Under agreement which

Washington has yet to modify in the face of repeated recommendations, United States dollar aid is extended on a basis of $1 for 35 piastres. The piastre, even on the semi-official market, is worth less than half the official rate and is worth about one-third the value on the black market, or at the financial center of Hong Kong. The United States, therefore, is getting no more than 50% of the mileage we should expect on the aid dollar."

Mr. Johnson told the committee, "The figure is utterly unrealistic. The added and unnecessary cost to the United States taxpayer is approximately $20 million a month." This amounted to $240 million a year! How likely is it then that the $320 million a year quoted by Mr. Leland Barrows to the Washington press was anywhere near the honest figure?

"The $20 million a month loss entailed by our maintenance of the fantastic artificial piastre rate," Mr. Johnston stated categorically, "is not going into public treasuries, it is going into private pockets," and he put the result correctly when he affirmed that the faith of the people of the area is "being shaken by the spectacle of the undeserved enrichment of a favored group."

Unfortunately, by representing to Congress all aid as

"defense-connected," those favoring its maintenance or increase carried the day. Ignored was Mr. Johnston's conclusion that United States funds were being used to "build and equip armed forces, some of whose officers and men seem to thfnlc of their mission only in terms of ancient hostilities and rivalries. Communist aggression and communism obviously do not constitute the primary menace, nor provide alone a sufficient challenge to motivate current military training programs."

As American goods mounted on Saigon shelves and customs sheds became packed to overflowing, a corrupt officialdom, like an army of ants swarming over a decaying carcass, sought more ways of acquiring currency and providing scapegoats to blame for its lack. All that America knew was what could be gleaned from such vague reports as AP's dispatch of February 16, 1958, out of Washington: "The International Cooperation Administration yesterday approved the expenditure of $9,141,800 to buy petroleum, textiles and other commodities from worldwide sources for South Vietnam."

In far-off Saigon the scramble for money and scapegoats continued. The nationalization laws against the Chinese and Cambodians, and Vietnam's

confiscation moves were phases of that scramble by which shake-downs were legalized and bribery encouraged. It was obvious eight years before history's foreclosure that the dividends on our huge investment in this country, the total of which will never be divulged, were going to be negative; yet, on May 20, 1957, Walter Lippmann headed his column in the New York Herald Tribune, "The Case for Foreign Aid." One week later he wrote "The President's Plea for Foreign Aid." Half of our foreign aid for 1957 went to Formosa, South Korea and South Vietnam.

What happened to the money we poured into South Vietnam (besides "generating currency" and bribing opposition generals with sums running into the millions to rally to Diem, which we have already mentioned) could fill a book. The February 1959 plot to finance a revolution in neighboring Cambodia should not be omitted. While rural roads were torn up by Red saboteurs, construction crews toiled to make a private road and landscaped approach to a new rose-fringed mountain retreat for the Ngo dinhs in Dalat. (Louis Kraar report to Wall Street Journal, previously mentioned.) The International Pipe and Ceramics Company of East Orange, New Jersey, landed a $5,600,000 contract for 14.7 miles of pipeline, and Hydrotechnic Corporation of New York raced to put in a $7,144,000 water-treating plant before the blow-up. A

$9,207,700 sewage disposal project was next on the board.

Albert M. Colegrove of the Scripps-Howard chain dealt Vietnam aid swindlers their hardest blow in mid-1959. In a series of articles Colegrove stated, "We've flooded the country with tractors, trucks, jeeps, factories. The people don't know what to do with them." He added, "It's like giving your young son, who has never been behind the wheel of a car, a new Cadillac, a hundred-dollar bill, and an instruction book and telling him to run along and have a good time."

The American aid boys at the top were savvy. Knowing the Colegrove report might touch off an explosion, Leland Barrows, the aid chief responsible when everything from atomic reactors to watch factories was being installed in South Vietnam (giving Ho chi Minh tangible evidence of the fruits to be garnered by being patient), was quietly hauled out of Saigon and permitted to take cover in Falls Church, Virginia. Then the attack started, not on foreign aid waste but on Colegrove. IGA, as usual applying

picket-line tactics, set out to destroy the boat-rocker. Another Scripps-Howard man, Jim G. Lucas, went to Saigon to see if his colleague had exaggerated, and Lucas' reports were, if anything, more devastating than Colegrove's. What happened? A Senate committee was set up to investigate the charges. Who was in charge of it? Mike Mansfield. Needless to say Mike's "godson" and his family came out unscathed, and Colegrove's excellent story on "Our Hidden Scandal—Arrogant U. S. Bureaucrats Roil Vietnamese," which appeared in the New York World-Telegram of July 23, 1959, was buried and forgotten by July 25 of the same month. The Washington Post in its editorial of January 5, 1960, called such reports "Picking on Vietnam." And President Eisenhower refused to let the Senate investigating committee look at the books on American aid to South Vietnam. There the matter rested.

American aid paid off in hate.

Leland Barrows, in his Washington Post interview of February 18, 1957, boasted of having resettled "43,000 refugees in six months in 8,000 new houses along more than 100 miles of canals, newly dug by hand." Barrows was spieling propaganda. What his project bought was hate. David Hotham, the London Times correspondent mentioned in the previous chapter, wrote, "If Diem's army contributes little or nothing to the advancement of the Southern people, neither does the resettlement of the Northern refugees.... This was a great successful human operation (though it was also of course a maneuver in the Cold War). But to settle nearly 900,000 Tonkinese

refugees, two-thirds of them Catholics, among the primarily Buddhist population of Cochin-China was not calculated to endear a Catholic President and his Western supporters to the people of the South. The latter have, besides, every reason to be envious of the money spent on these undesirable visitants from the North, and of the houses, work and land—all of which are short in the South—with which they are provided." American aid paid off in hate in other instances as well. John Osborne, in his article in Life, May 13, 1957, warned, "They [the Vietnamese] remember that brother Nhu, riding around in his palace Citroen today, was working and living in his union's dirty, fly-pestered quarters not so long ago. They note that Mme. Ngo dinh Nhu, a tiny and articulate beauty of 28, has emerged as her

bachelor brother-in-law's official hostess, as leader of the nation's organized women, and as an 'Independent' member of the Assembly, to which her husband was also elected."

Vietnamese exiles claimed that Paris' big movie theater, the Rex, and the dance hall, Reve, attached to it, as well as apartments and buildings running into millions of dollars, were "overseas investments" of the Ngo dinhs. The Paris daily L'Aurore, March 18, 1958, mentioned only the Rex motion picture chain.

Hotham, the Britisher, told America in his New Republic article of November 25, 1957:

The present writer spent nearly three years in Saigon as the correspondent of an English newspaper. He has no axe to grind other than to make what contribution he can to the over-riding objective of saving the people of this comer of Asia from the desperate system of Communism. It is his view that Western policy in South Vietnam has gone completely oft the rails, and unless it is radically changed now, or is again plunged into chaos, it will be a dangerous shock for the Western world and a menace for the rest of Asia. Such, however, is the danger today, and the Western nation mainly concerned is the United States. Into this little country of 11 million inhabitants the U. S. pumped about $770 million of aid since the end of the Indochina war in 1954. It has given the government of President Ngo dinh Diem every kind of support that a great power can give to a small — diplomatic, military, economic, moral. Yet, it has to be admitted, and the Americans themselves do admit it, that those who bring this unstinting aid are nol liked in the

country to which they bring it, and that the economic situation there, instead of improving as the result of it, is rapidly deteriorating. What is wrong?

On May 6, 1959, Admiral Felix Stump, vice president of the Freedom Foundation of America, conferred his foundation's award on Diem for "Freedom Leadership"—in the police state America was supporting.

Unless everything Hotham prophesied in 1957 was what our planners wanted, the billions we invested in a man—to the detriment of his people—were worse than wasted. Southeast Asia came to hate us, and the NATO allies against whom Diem and his American backers played us became

embittered. Americans, the extortion victims forced to pay for all this, will next be mulcted for armaments to protect their country from the results.

One of the lessons that could have been learned was that ICA, the agency handling American funds in South Vietnam, was a haven, not for political scientists but for sociologists, and the sociologist was able to use America's wealth and prestige for his political aims, which the State Department ably supported.

When Southeast Asia was about to sink, our officials responsible for it were picked up as by a giant magnet and dropped— in Africa—to repeat the performance. Edmund Gullion, political officer in the American embassy in Saigon, was made ambassador to the Congo, to help labor leader Adoula destroy Katanga. William Gibson, formerly at the Vietnam desk in the American embassy in Paris, was made U. S. consul in Angola, where irate Portuguese threw his car in the river in July 1961. Charles Yost, formerly U. S. charge d'affaires in Laos, became ambassador to Morocco in time to turn America's great (French-owned) air base there over to the Moroccans. From Morocco Yost went home to become Adlai Stevenson's assistant at United Nations.

Leland Barrows, our Saigon ICA chief through the crucial years, was named ambassador to the Camerouns. And Michigan State University, its Vietnam Project, police-training and propaganda-producing for the Ngo dinhs suddenly terminated, embarked on an African project, ushered in by a mourning parade for the Communist Lumumba. Angier Biddle Duke became Kennedy's chief of protocol and as his first official act swore in foreign aid-for-Africa chief, Henri Labouisse. (Mme. Labouisse, the former Eve Curie, told newsmen she

was no longer interested in nuclear science but would make her husband's work her work—aid for Africa.)

As investments, our hard-headed forebears might call the above guilt-edged. The dividends for first Russia and then Peking have been immense.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE CHAIN REACTION

Thoughtful American lawmakers acted long ago to prevent private citizens from entering into relations with heads of foreign states and dabbling in diplomacy. The extent to which crusading Americans, who

should have been minding their business within America, intruded in fields where their qualifications were nil is illustrated by an incident that took place in early 1957. The Hungarian revolt, as we have stated, provided an excellent opportunity for socialists of the Buttinger ilk to circumvent existing immigration laws. Large batches of foreign nationals who were unlikely, according to Mr. Arens of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, ever to cast a conservative vote were rammed through the immigration barriers while the headlines were hot. As 1956 ended, This Week magazine carried a number of articles signed by Mr. Buttinger's friend, Leo Cheme, that were undeniably propaganda for the operation designed to flood America with refugees.

Following the article published December 30, 1956, Mr. Cheme was asked, "How can one direct a rescue committee and plead for funds to help men escape Communist tyranny and at the same time sit on the executive committee that fights, with its ears closed to every unpleasant report, to maintain a family clique that can match every political prisoner in Budapest with an anti-Communist patriot languishing in concentration camps in South Vietnam? . . .

"American people who have depended upon your association for honest reports and written letters to their senators advocating support of policies your executive committee has recommended cannot be put off forever with bland assurances that the unpleasant rumblings emanating from South Vietnam are due to 'French propaganda and Franco-British intrigue.' At this instant President Diem is putting the final touches to his new accord with France and, through Buu Hoi, negotiating a similar one with Ho chi Minh, preparing, as his relations with Washington deteriorate, to play France and Ho against America.

"These things are going to prove embarrassing some day.

Believe me, sir, when The American Friends of Vietnam, which was organized to aid a people fighting with their backs to the sea, becomes a propaganda machine for a man and his hated family, there must be an inevitable shadow cast over everything done thereafter by that Association's directing committee members. Short-memoried as the American public is, I cannot help but believe that the Rescue Committee's bed-partner, American

Friends of Vietnam, will some day cause the Committee a loss of prestige at the time when some future revolt will make its work needed most."

Cheme's reply of January 16, 1957, was arrogantly condescending. "I doubt that anything I would tell you concerning my admiration for President Diem and the effective nature of his government and his people's resistance to Communism would alter your point of view," he wrote. What did Cherae really know about Diem?—the answer is "Nothing." He was off on a Diem kick which he termed "admiration."

Closing his eyes to every aspect of the Diem regime but the refugee influx, in which Diem himself was passive, Cheme repeated the threadbare refrain, "If a President and a government which have given sanctuary to a million people who fled from Communism can be called freedom-extinguishing, then by that logic I would expect you to say that Ho chi Minh carries the torch of freedom."

Snide insolence or no reply at all was the answer every man who knew what was going on received from the small clique making Vietnam their business.

As head of the Research Institute of America, Mr. Cherne delivered a lecture in Los Angeles in 1956, at which time he met Mrs. Doris Parks, wife of a prominent attorney. Mrs. Parks drew the director of Diem's American lobby out on a limb. In a letter to Mr. Cherne she asked if it were true that President Diem was holding the wives and children of anticommunist nationalist leaders as hostages. Cheme hotly denied the allegation. Whereupon Mrs. Parks expressed pleasure and told him that in that case she was sure Madame Nguyen ton Hoan and her children, currently being held as hostages, would be given a passport and be permitted to join Dr. Hoan in Paris.

Cheme stalled for time while he talked it over with the lobby. On December 18, 1956, he wrote to Mrs. Parks, "Your letter is far too important for me to rush an uninformed reply. You can be sure that neither I nor any of us who are associated with the International Rescue Committee or the American Friends of Vietnam would in the slightest measure be indif

ferent to any diminution of freedom in Vietnam or anywhere else for that matter.

“I will seek to enlarge my information and will write to you just as soon as I am able.”

But Mrs. Parks was not to be put off. She stated that she was not as charitable toward Mr. Buttinger, Mr. Cheme’s fellow member of the executive committee of the Diem lobby, as Mr. Cherne was. She wanted Mme. Hoan and her children liberated, and at once. She continued, on December 28, in a letter to Mr. Cheme:

In personal contact with Dr. Hoan one thing shines like a light. He is completely honest in his dedication to his country and the cause of freedom. Contrast this with the smooth rationalization Pres. Diem handed out to Freda Utley and which she reported to the U. S. A. through an article for National Review, Nov. 24th, 1956, of the necessity for dictatorship and political prisons that democratic institutions in South Vietnam can be protected and saved. What nonsense if it were not such a tragedy. How can Mr. Buttinger have spent hours with a man of Dr. Hoan’s rare intelligence and dedication, heard his story, and then go right on directing and participating in a delusion of the American public about Ngo dinh Diem?

Friends of mine in the Philippines are quite positive that Mr. Buttinger was one of the last visiting Americans that Dr. Hoan’s Dai Viet Nationalists risked arrest for, by daring 'to pour out their story to him. What did he do about their story? Where was it reported?

With passionate awareness of America’s opportunity to assist the cause of freedom in today’s dark world with deeds, not just a mountain of expressed lofty sentiment, I am sure you want substance back of your words I quoted at the beginning of this letter.

Well, Dr. Hoan’s Christmas card from Paris stares back at me. Mme. Hoan and his children are still being held in South Vietnam sans passport.”

Backed in a comer, the man whose heart bled for the Hungarians replied in an outburst of anger on January 2, 1957, when forced to look at realities in Vietnam under the man whose stranglehold on the country Mr. Cherne and his friends had made their business.

Dear Mrs. Parks,

Your second letter is so strikingly different in attitude and objectivity from your first that I cannot fail to comment upon it. I said I would move to secure the facts. I also tried to state my own political and philosophical

formulation before finding out whether or not you would have any reason to have confidence in my judgment or reason to have faith in my democratic commitment.

You have now proceeded to lecture me. You also find you cannot accept my statement at face value. I wonder, then, why you took the trouble to write to me—I certainly must have been equally suspect before.

I have no doubt you knew before that I was a member of AMERICAN FRIENDS OF VIETNAM. Though a member of its Executive Committee, I have not participated in the deliberations of that committee except on rare occasions because of my rather complete preoccupation with the problems of the International Rescue Committee.

You then proceed to evaluate Mr. Buttinger for me. I know Mr. Buttinger well. I have for some years. I wonder whether you have ever met him. I plan to ask him this question when he returns from Vienna where he went on entirely his own expense to function as European Director of Hungarian Relief for IRC.

There are few men in the world whose consistent, democratic convictions, courage in political action, and dedication to free values, in my judgment, I respect more than Mr. Buttinger. If you have not met Mr. Buttinger, it might help to explain to you why Dr. Hoan, of whom you write, speaks so highly of him.

Quite candidly, I have no further intention of further debating this matter of Vietnam with you. I do have intention, owever, of ascertaining the facts and guiding my actions accordingly. I am sorry I have had reason to disappoint you in the past. You might have waited to find out whether that reason proved unjustified in this instance, or, provided that you had, saved us both time.

Sincerely, Leo Cheme (signed)

Two weeks later Ngo dinh Diem sent for Mme. Hoan in Saigon and told her that she could leave the country when she wished. All of this roundabout pressure and exchange of letters to force an act of common decency.

When Leo Cheme’s admiration for President Diem, which he saw no point in trying to explain to ignorant dolts who had studied the Indochina scene for many years, abated, we do not know. Joseph Buttinger must have

begun to have doubts, for when the 463-page Vietnam book he mentioned in his famous 1955 letter finally appeared, in early 1958, he disposed of the whole Diem period with six innocuous pages. In a letter written to Dr. Hoan on February 10, 1958, Buttinger forestalled unfavorable observations by Vietnamese able and likely to expose him by encouraging them to hope that someday he might mobilize American support for them. His failure to make any criticism of the Diem regime, he told Dr. Hoan, was "because I know too little about it." This from the man who had lobbied for said regime, silenced its critics, and as he himself had promised Diem in the letter we have quoted, worked to keep American opinion and policy behind it.

The book itself, entitled The Smaller Dragon and published by Praeger, was a hodgepodge of material Mr. Buttinger had collected on Vietnam's long-past rulers and gleaned of everything favorable to the socialist, anti-colonialist thesis. What emerged was a sort of Jean Jacques Rousseau glorification of the unspoiled native. Kings, according to socialist dialects, one gathered, were good if long dead and victims of European superior armament, and only bad if alive and posing the problems of legitimacy. The most glowing review and praise of the author was Leo Cheme's full page in the New Leader of May 12, 1958. This time Mr. Cheme wrote as the director of the Research Institute of America, in no way connected with Mr. Joseph Buttinger.

Just one year before the Buttinger book appeared, the Dai Viet party had compiled a "white book" on the graft, corruption and police state methods current under Diem and his brothers. Dr. Hoan, then without funds in Paris, scraped together enough money among his fellow party members in exile to send copies to Joseph Buttinger, General O'Daniel, Angier Biddle Duke, Leo Cheme and other "authorities" on South Vietnam then sitting at the head tables of pro-Diem banquets. So hungry were the men who had made South Vietnam their avocation for information on the subject that every one of them refused to accept delivery of the book.

By 1957 it was no longer a matter of simply changing presi

dents, rhe family was riding a tiger. Opposition had been crushed too brutally, for too long. Pressures had been built up. Disapproval had given way to hatred. As the hatred increased within the country, Father Patrick O'Connor and Father de Jaegher had to use the weight of their great

authority to increase counter pressure from without. Their man simply must not fall, for the time was past when Diem's removal could be effected without violence. The church, the cloth, the weight of the words of Diem's friends as priests, were brought into play to save him. "Guests" of the Ngo dinhs, who would go home and plead their cause, poured through Saigon. All parrotted the claim that no matter what "the family" did, we must stick by them because they were fighting communism. They were not; instead they were fighting for their monopoly on a country, with the Communist threat as a tailring point.

Joseph Nerbonne, of the Los Angeles Times, told his readers on May 5, 1957, "Gradually Diem whittled away the strength of his opponents, soundly beating most, persuading some to come over to his side, buying off others and by degrees winning the admiration of the majority of suspicious Vietnamese south of the 17th parallel." Though the "long war" of the Reds was proceeding smoothly, with one village after another passing under complete Red control at night and, by agreement with the Vietminh, presenting the surface calm of government control by day, Nerbonne wrote and the Los Angeles Times printed the statement that "One of the most impressive achievements [of Diem] since taking office is the restoration of security in a country physically broken by Japanese occupation and eight years of civil war." It was as dishonest as

Mded "8eS aSSeiti0n " 1963 that "Vietnam's down spiral is

Daily, inexorably, the rotting at the base continued. On January 2, 1958, a band described by the press as "pirates" attacked a rubber plantation forty-seven miles from Saigon and made off with a payroll of a million-and-a-half piastres, taking u fePre^entative of the Saigon government with them. The pirates were members of the Cao Dai sect, which the Amer

InH papers dajJy assured their readers had been destroyed and were never heard of any more.

chtWn Si ab°Ut a ?ear after Mme' Hoan ^d her three been Permitted to leave the country, it looked as • c* ^ a flange of attitude might be taking place in Washmgton. A Vietnamese teen-ager wrote a letter to Alfred Friend

^ Washington Post' which Mr. Friendly put on the Post s front page of February 25, 1958. When one con

siders the following letter, one can appreciate the encouragement it gave the Vietnamese opposition that the Washington Post should print it.

Dear Mr. Friendly:

I am a little Vietnamese girl. I saw your name in a newspaper and decided to write to you because your name sounded the nicest.

Here are some questions I would like to know about America, for now, Vietnamese people are living under the help of your country.

I would also like to let you know what I think about America. These questions are my doubts towards your country. If you answer my questions, I am sure that all the other Vietnamese will appreciate it.

1. Hoes American Government help Vietnamese people because of these principal reasons: a—Commercial point of view: Vietnam will be a big market foi the commerce and industry of America, b—Strategic point of view: Vietnam will be used to stop communism,

2. Is it right that the policy oi American Government is to assimilate all the countries living undei its help?

3. Will Americans go home soon oi will they stay in Vietnam for a hundred years?

4. Do American people know that Ngo Dinh Diem is an American puppet as some ot the Vietnamese think?

5. Do American people know tha' 95% of Vietnamese people don't like them?

Mi. Friendly, I found that although we live under the help of Americans but we don't like Americans, we don't get along with Americans.

6. What do Americans think about Vietnamese people? Do they consider us as Negros in America?

7. Is President Eisenhower influenced by big capitalists such as General Motors, General Electric, or other interests?

8. Why are there still a lot of White Americans do not get along with Black Americans? Do they still have the impression that Blak (sic) Americans are their slaves?

I think America is a democratic and free country so such a colored separation must be ended. The trouble at Little Rock, do you think that was a big shame hung over America?

9. What do Americans think about the Russian man-made moon and 150 atomic sub-marines?

I think that's a big mortification for American Government.

10. Do you agree with me that Americans do not have man-made moon because American spies could not work in Russia?

(Russians control their country very rigid.)

11. How can Hollywood (sic) make James Deans more popular than President Eisenhower in Vietnam?

If America is really a democratic country, I am sure that your Government will let you answer all of my questions.

Sincerely yours, and Thanks,

Miss Le-My* (*A pseudonym)

What happened to this "Miss Le-My" no one ever asked. An avalanche of letters from anti-Diem Vietnamese descended on Mr. Friendly till, over the grapevine, went the word, "No more letters to Friendly. They are being turned over to CIA." Cheme, under his Research Institute of America identity, addressed a New York conference on "Investment Conditions in Vietnam" and managed to work in a reply to Miss Le-My, which Mary Hornaday, staff correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor, reported in the Monitor of March 3, 1958.

On October 30, 1958, a New York Times editorial proclaimed with all die pompous dignity of the Times, "Three years ago chances for success in this beleaguered country seemed small . . . Strong leadership and wisely given help tipped the scale. President Ngo dinh Diem attacked the

dissidents frontally and defeated them. He set up truly representative government, in itself no small gamble, and derived his authority, which is great, from the will of the people . . . Out in the villages the Government showed how it was possible to beat the communists on their own ground."

What of this "authority" and these victories the liberal in Times Square in New York thought he could make a reality simply by continually telling us they existed? Authority smugly described as "coming from the people"? Through the summer of 1959 "approved candidates" campaigned for the national assembly elections due to take place on August 30th. Phan quang Dan and an independent named Nguyen Tran announced their candidacy. Press censorship prevented Saigon papers from speaking of them. Diem's special-powers law denied them the right to address assemblies of more than five people. If their supporters tried to put up posters they were arrested. Every inch of wall and billboard space was reserved for Diem's handpicked candidates. Because supporters of Dan and Nguyen Tran had

been arrested for putting up election posters (it was said, over posters of the opponents), condemnations were filed against their chiefs.

Despite all these handicaps Dan, running under the banner of his Free Democrat party, got 10,000 votes more than the next highest vote-getter on the ticket. He and Nguyen Tran were both elected. Diem them disqualified them under his rubber-stamp law that men with condemnations against them were ineligible for office. Dan entered the assembly anyway and demanded his seat, since he had received 33,166 votes against the government candidate's 6,700. Two of Diem's police came in and forcibly threw him out. No word of this, however, appeared in Time magazine's September 14, 1959, report on South Vietnam's elections.

Through the long summer of 1960 a sullen resentment gripped the country. The country's feelings had been expressed in the August 30, 1959, elections. Diem's contempt for the country's wishes was made clear when his policemen forcibly hustled Phan quang Dan out of the assembly. The conclusions, to the people, were obvious. Things might have dragged on indefinitely, however, with no more than a latent, growing feeling among the masses that life could not be much worse under Ho chi Minh, had three crack battalions from General Giap's elite 325th division, trained at Gia-Lam near Hanoi, not erupted on the scene in mid-October to show their strength.

It started at 3:00 a. m. on October 21, 1960, in the darkness surrounding a guard post near Man Bac, about a hundred miles

north of Kontoum in the High Plateau region of the montagnard tribes. The post had been set up to protect a supply base for one of the grandiose projects being pushed under American aid. It was a new road,- a prolongation of Route 14 to join Kontoum with Quang Nam. Two battalions surged out of the night in the initial attack. They blew up part of the defenses, destroyed trucks, bulldozers and other road-building equipment estimated at around $5.7 million. Most of the workmen were killed. Only one small post defended by civil guards and a small unit of the national army held out.

Knowing the ruses of the Vietminh, many later agreed that the post may have been permitted to survive. The attackers knew its defenders would radio frantically for support, which they did. Two of the attacking battalions installed themselves in positions they had seized while a third set up an

ambush along the road, to await the relief column. After four o'clock in the afternoon it came, weighted down with trucks and tanks, repairing sabotaged stretches of the road along the way.

The Vietminh (Vietcong) battalions, forming a regular Ho chi Minh regiment, were superbly armed with the most modem weapons, superior if anything to the equipment of the national army. The furious combat that ensued lasted for several days, on terrain that was ideal for the Communists. Diem's heavy, impeccable, spit-and-polish army was not prepared for it. For the first time Giap's real striking force was unleased to fight as an army. It was his warning that the change from long-war to short-campaign could and might come at any time.

As more national troops were flown north to counter the offensive, Vietminh regiments appeared from nowhere. Not three battalions but a Vietminh division, supported by the local population, had moved in with all its equipment, flares, bazookas, heavy mortars. Captured materiel proved to be French and American.

When the battle was ovei the Reds leisurely withdrew to their bases in Laos, taking with them what they could, destroying what was left. With a jolt the Vietnamese army took stock of its losses. From the balance sheet a painful truth stood out: They had been decimated because the people of the countryside had acted as the eyes and ears of the enemy. Officers faced the obvious lesson and reacted accordingly. There was more to soldiering than supporting a man on whose tenure in office the army's pay depended. If there were going to be any more Kontoums because of hatred of the man on

whom the Americans made the army's pay contingent, better to have a showdown over pay than be cut to pieces.

The Kontoum battle can be said to have touched off the chain reaction that in three years ended in the crumbling of everything America had built up in nine years at the cost of billions of dollars and more lives than American mothers have even oeen told. The world did not know what had happened. The censorship lid m Washington as well as Saigon was just as tight. But the Vietnamese army knew, and in less than two weeks after the Kontoum oattle ended, the aimy stirred.

In the heavy air of a tropical morning, just before dawn broke over Saigon on November 11, 1960, parachutists in rubber-soled shoes and camouflaged nylon combat uniforms surrounded the palace where Diem

slept. For thirty-six hours Diem's fate hung in the balance. Through duplicity, bluffing, lying, and stalling for time he won, and once more the lead weight of an ever-present but intangible menace hung over the city. Men spoke in low voices again, looking carefully around before expressing themselves. Over a hundred and fifty were wounded, some thirty killed. Diem survived, but America had her warning.

CHAPTER TWENTY
PRELUDE TO THE END

The events of Friday, November 11, 1960, and the day that followed were to color everything that happened thereafter, and ultimately to create an unbridgable gulf of suspicion between officers whose first aim should have remained the salvation of their country.

The big opportunity came when Diem, fearing a general Vietcong offensive, put the three battalions of parachutists surrounding the capital as security forces under the operational command of the army. Until then their every movement had been watched and controlled from the palace. Colonel Nguyen chanh Thi, commander of the troops in question, had a healthy respect for Nhu's secret police, but his adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel Vuong van Dong, had been waiting for just such an opportunity. Dong's uncle, the lawyer Hoang co Thuy, was a friend of Phan quang Dan and deputy Phan khac Suu. And Phan khac Suu had incurred Diem's displeasure by accusing the government of corruption, oppression, undemocratic elections, despotism, favoritism in army appointments, gross inefficiency in administration, and nepotism in business.

In a seven-page manifesto signed by fifteen deputies, Phan khac Suu and his Progress and Liberty party had demanded government reforms on May 1, 1960. Diem ignored them. So at 3:00 a. m. on November 11, carrying his colonel with him, Lt. Col. Dong profited by their temporary freedom of movement to occupy strategic points of the city. The barracks of the presidential guard, near Diem's subterranean dungeons and torture cells in the botanical gardens, were taken by assault. According to statements made later by Dong and his fellow officers, they would have seized the presidential palace without a shot if, at the last moment, they had not been betrayed by an ambitious armored car officer who, taking that road to sure promotion, alerted the palace guard just before the paratroopers arrived there.

Diem barely had time to take shelter in the bunker he had prepared for just such an emergency. Outside the police had

joined the rebels. Dong wanted to storm the palace at once. Others wanted to wait for heavier armament. Colonel Thi was for negotiating, and this was their downfall. In his extremity Diem remembered the time-tried counsel given by his American advisors in the spring of 1955 when he faced the forces of the Bmh Xuyen, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, the masses of the Dai Viet party and beyond them all the country: “Invite negotiations; play for time,” he had been told. {Time, April 4, 1955) In other words, promise your countrymen anything until their guard is down, then knife them.

General McGarr was American commander of the advisory group at the time of the pre-dawn revolt of November 11,1960, and McGarr was at a loss. He temporized. Washington was in the throes of an election and in the absence of orders to jump one way or the other General McGarr followed the oriental maxim which warns, “To make no mistake, do nothing.” He urged Dong and the group opting for action to “try to reach an understanding with Diem.”

Accordingly, old General JLe van Ty, the chief of staff who had been Diem’s tool since September 1954 when the army was threatened with no American aid and hence no pay if it did not desert General Hinh, was brought forward to act as emissary. Ty had been arrested when the paratroopers moved on the palace. Colonel Thi and Lieutenant-Colonel Dong, as heads of the military committee and president of the provisional government, respectively, empowered General Ty to promise Diem their cooperation. Diem would not be forced from power; all they demanded was that Nhu and his wife be sent elsewhere.

Diem pretended to negotiate. He made objections, requested time to consider certain points and promised that his reply would be delivered that evening. Meanwhile from his shortwave post in the palace ounker went a stream of calls for ‘loyal” troops to move on the capital. Above all, Diem and Nhu were trying to contact Diem’s godson, Colonel Tran thien Khiem, who was with the 21st division in Mytho south of Saigon. The press at the time referred to Colonel Khiem as Diem s nephew; he was not a nephew

but Diem had held him at the baptismal fount and on arrival m power he had pushed Khiem ahead among his favorites.

m the city delirious crowds were pulling down Diem's pictures from public buildings and burning Madame Nhu in effigy, out a heavy atmosphere of indecision was discernible. A wary foreboding pervaded the city, a feeling that it was too good to be true, that secret police were watching and that if, in the end, the brothers besieged in the palace were to come out

victors, it would go hard with anyone manifesting too much joy in the brief period of liberty.

A Vietnamese named Ha van Tran provided the Associated Press with such on-the-spot news as AP passed on to the American public. Ha, who had seen priests go to jail for doubting Diem's popularity, prudently stuck to a line that had never failed to please the Americans and which would not cost him his neck if Diem and Nhu came out on top. Ha told America, via AP on November 11, that "a military revolutionary committee said it had overthrown the government of President Ngo dinh Diem. The fate of the Catholic, staunchly anticommunist chief executive was not immediately known ... At least 15 paratroopers were reported killed in fighting around the presidential palace in the heart of the capital where the ruling French colonialists of Indochina once sat" The real villains, if one wanted to be on the safe side, were still the French.

By mid-afternoon members of Nhu's Republican Youth Movement were in the streets in quarters unoccupied by the paratroopers, distributing hastily printed tracts announcing that officers leading the revolt had been "bought by the communists and the colonialists."

"It is the habit of the Diem government to baptize as Vietmmh all opposers of the regime," Jean Larteguy wrote in Paris Presse of November 15. No one accepted the story that Thi and Dong, both noted for their patriotism and anti-Communist sentiments, had sold out to the enemy. Nhu then changed the charge to incitement by the Americans with the French colonialists perhaps having a hand in it. Saigon USIS Chief Anspacher was the American on whom Nhu and Diem's secretary of state for the presidency were setting their sights.

All afternoon that Saturday of November 11 the desperate radio calls from the bunker continued. To gain time Diem agreed to a list of reforms—

civil liberties, free elections, a new economic program, more effective measures against the Communists and the elimination of the Nhus from any hand in government. It looked as though the colonels had won. Phan quang Dan and the civilian opposition emerged from their hideouts and gathered around a microphone to announce their support of the revolt while Dong prepared to storm the palace. Someone persuaded him to wait till the next day.

By Saturday morning Diem's personal troops of the 7th division had reached Bien Hoa, less than twenty miles from Saigon, and eleven tanks commanded by his godson, Khiem, were rolling on the city. A unit of Vietnamese marines sensed

that Thi and Dong had waited too long and agreed to bring the rescuing troops in by boat, past the roadblocks and demolished bridges.

Since eight that morning the crowd had been demonstrating around the palace, bearing placards inscribed, "Down with Ngo dinh Diem and His Family." Still Dong did not move. Around 1:00 p. m. Khiem arrived with his tanks, embraced his fellow officers, and swore that he was with them. To Colonel Thi he confided that a circle of tanks around the palace would not only assure the success of their assault but guarantee the safety of Diem, should a popular uprising get out of control. Thi trusted him completely. But Khiem was only following instructions he had received from the palace to stall for time until the infantry could arrive from Bien Hoa. Then the gun turrets of his tanks were slowly turned on his comrades. From the palace the presidential guard began firing into the crowd. How many were killed is not known for sure; it was estimated that as many as 400 paratroopers died before the Affair was over. Then the purge of the army and arrests of civilians started.

Demonstrations were set up to convince the Americans that the people were still behind Diem. A mass was held in Saigon's cathedral for "the recovery of peace." Demonstrators mobilized from labor unions, the national assembly, The National Revolutionary League, and Nhu's youth groups went out with their banners, and South Vietnam was almost back where it had been—but not quite.

If Diem had emerged with his ego and obstinacy unscathed, the lesson was still there for all to see. The army was no longer sure. Of all the units called upon by the desperate brothers, in the palace basement, only Khiem

had answered. The others waited. Had the revolutionary committee stormed the palace with determination the army and the nation would have been behind them.

A purge committee was set up by the government to track down civilians and military who, during the forty-eight hours of suspense had shown little alacrity to come to the aid of Diem. And when the work of the purge committee was finished the backbone of Vietnam's military command had been broken. Some officers, feeling that they were suspect, fled to the brush. Only Diem's creatures remained in commands.

A friend of Nhu's named Trong cong Cuu was appointed to direct the score-settling. Another Nhu lieutenant named Nguyen dinh Thuan became a sort of superminister with the functions of secretary of state to the president, defense, psycho

logical warfare and information. The secretary of state for civic action, a sort of Vietnamese Arthur .Larson named Ngo trong Hieu, took over police operations; and henceforth this trio, accountable only to Diem and Nhu, directed the gestapo which was to bring America's new president face to face with reality. NeVfer again were the solutions which Senator Kennedy had supported, as a Diem partisan in the front organization led by his chief of protocol, to seem so simple.

Of the civilians involved in the attempted coup, only Hoang co Thuy escaped. He fled to France. Phan quang Dan and his friend Pham khac Suu were arrested, along with many of thenassociates. Colonel Thi and Lieutenant-Colonel Dong, accompanied by a handful of fellow officers, commandeered a DC3 at gunpoint and took refuge in Pnom Penh, Cambodia. Khiem emerged a general of brigade and the Judas of the army. Real victor of the fracas was the Communist National Liberation Front. The number of adherents to it mounted with every day that Diem remained in power and Nhu's vengeance committee continued in operation.

Jean Larteguy proclaimed in heavy headlines in Paris Presse of November 26, "Hurry, Mr. Kennedy, the communists are about to win the Dien Bien Phu of the rotting war on the free world's Asiatic front." His report in retrospect seems written with clairvoyance. "Ambassadors, military commanders and special services, each draw their own conclusions, settling scores according to their personal sympathies or

antipathies, but for the most part doing nothing. They waited to see whether America would vote democrat or republican."

Larteguy continued, "Yet this was the moment when great decisions should have been taken in all the fragile countries that cling to life only through perpetual injections of dollars, a few administrative traditions inherited from their former colonizers and the armies which they must pay, train and arm.

"For three months there was a vacuum. The communists jumped in to fill it. Act quickly, Mr. Kennedy, if you do not want to see the red flag floating over Saigon, Vientiane, Bangkok, Pnom Penh, Rangoon and Singapore, and the Occident driven from the Orient forever.

"Diem is committing suicide, in South Vietnam the situation is gravest. Failure of the coup d'etat on November 11 permitted a condemned regime to survive, but it is no longer supported by the people and President Diem has shown himself incapable of fighting communism effectively ... His police state system has alienated the people of the south to a point

where they are exclaiming, cWe may as well have the VietminhP "

William Buckley's National Review of that same date, November 26, 1960, unburdened by Mr. Larteguy's vast personal knowledge of Southeast Asia, told its readers the Russians were "hotting up the cold war." It was that simple. "Last week they provoked and backed an attempt to unseat the authoritarian and strongly pro-American regime of Ngo dinh Diem," wrote National Review. Diem was so pro-American that the "anti-rebel and anti-Communist committee" he and Nhu had thrown together as a front was distributing handbills from army trucks, telling Vietnamese who would not accept the line that Communists had instigated the coup that colonialists and British and American imperialists had incited the paratroopers.

None of this reached the American public. Don Fifield of the N. Y. Herald Tribune News Service reported that the "Saigon coup seemed inevitable" (Washington Post, November 12, 1960), but a frank disclosure of the facts would have constituted an admission that everything told the public to date had been false, and such an admission neither the press nor the State Department had any intention of making.

Larteguy, author of a long list of books on Southeast Asia, was not quoted by a single American paper when he wrote of the denunciations, the mass arrests and the posters demanding vengeance which left most Vietnamese only with a feeling of regret that the coup had failed. Larteguy

had known Dr. Dan for years. While soldiers still wearing army boots and pants but hastily provided with shirts to make them look like civilians were applauding Diem and Nhu in the streets in artificial demonstrations of popularity to impress the Americans, Dan from his place of hiding asked Larteguy to come see him. Said Dan:

"The events of the past three days reveal profound cracks in the political structure of the Ngo dinh Diem regime, the army, the administration and the people. This coup that failed marks a turning point in the destiny of South Vietnam. If the government refuses to understand the severe meaning of this warning and lets its passions over-ride its reason, if it gives free rein to its hunger for revenge and strengthens its totalitarianism, the days to come will be black and any adventure is possible. The only beneficiary will be communism," (Paris Presse, November 30, 1960)

The scramble for Washington support, as logic told Saigon exiles and agents alike that America must sooner or later take

another look at her "showcase," was frantic. Wherever there were Vietnamese the Vietnamese love of intrigue was evident. Exiles honestly concerned with the fate of their country had no entree to the American embassy in Paris, but informers, because they were paid to do so or because of the feeling of importance it gave them, came and went with exaggerated reports on the doings of their compatriots. After each such visit the informer, or gossiper, as the case may be, acquired face by telling his friends what the embassy official had said to him.

Somehow, out of the tell-tale visits, first to Bill Gibson and then to Francis Melloy and his successors, word spread through the Vietnamese colony in Paris that Dr. Clayton Williams, pastor of the American Church on Quai d'Orsay, was a top CIA agent and that his residence was a meeting place for high echelon emissaries of Allen Dulles. Overnight devout Vietnamese Catholics, Hoa Haos and Buddhists became ardent members of Dr. Williams' congregation. So two groups took form, one Diem's supporters who carried tales to the embassy and the other anti-Diem exiles who flattered themselves into thinking that they had a pipeline to the center of power through the pastor. Prominent among the latter was the former president de conseil, or prime minister, Tran van Huu. With a tenacity surprising in a man of his years, Tran van Huu never ceased plotting for a

return to power. First he dreamed of making a comeback as an anti-Communist protege of the Americans. When it became evident that his friendship with Foster Dulles' former pastor was not going to bring him advancement, and the people of South Vietnam were certainly not going to call for him, Huu changed tack. He gained the support of Ho chi Minh's followers wherever they were by becoming the man of the neutralists. And as, through popular hatred of Diem and his family, the anti-Communist cause rotted from within, Tran van Huu became the candidate for transition leadership, the front for Nguyen manh Ha, son-in-law of France's Communist deputy, Monsieur Maranne.

The one American to be concerned, and he because he was so deeply compromised, was the man whom Americans had elected only a few weeks before by the narrowest margin in history. Jack Kennedy looked over the files that had never reached the public. Considering the role the CIA and the American aid administration had played in the whole idiotic chapter of America's experiment in South Vietnam, the honesty of the facts placed before the new president is doubtful.

One thing, however, was inescapable: Nowhere was the

situation encouraging. The incoming American president was "holding the bag" which he in his demagoguery as senator had helped only too willingly to create. As the disintegration in Vietnam gained momentum those responsible for it in our government were tiptoeing off the stage and turning their attention to Africa. So was the AFL-CIO.

However, for President Kennedy, newly installed in the White House, escape was not quite that simple. The old days of irresponsible senatorial tirades were gone, and the search for an "out" from the pompous statements he had made as Senator Kennedy, proud to be a member of Diem's American lobby, must have taxed the talents of the new president to the utmost, highly developed though those talents were. The confidential reports the new president was studying, reports which never reached the American people, left no doubt that he was holding a hot potato. It was time to start looking for a way to unload.

On March 8, 1960, eight months before Colonel Thi's paratroopers blew the lid off and destroyed any illusion that either the Vietnamese army or people were behind Ngo dinh Diem, America had had her warning:

American-trained Brigadier General Duong van Due, commander of the National Order and one of the young hopes of the Vietnamese army, took advantage of a trip to Paris to write a declaration which he thought would alert the world. Due had been permanent secretary-general of Vietnam's national defense. What he said was:

"In view of the fact:

That Mr. Ngo dinh Diem did not hesitate to assume the responsibilities of power during the extremely grave period of 1954,

—that his promises made at the time of assuming power led the majority of the population to believe that he was going to lead Vietnam to a brilliant future,

—that his efforts in the course of the first year were dedicated to the re-establishment of order and security and the removal of the effects of war,

—my brothers in arms and myself ardently served in the reconstruction of the country under the leadership of Mr. Ngo dinh Diem.

"In view of the fact that:

One year later the government was able to control the entire territory of the South by grace of the efforts and sacrifices of the army, the people, and the administration,

—order and security being established, instead of building

a democratic regime based on justice and liberty, Mr. Ngo dinh Diem broke his promises, established a family dictatorship, backward and feudal, camouflaged as a republic;

—in no democratic country on earth does a government exist composed of five brothers of the same family and a president who has assumed the right to draw up a constitution and transmit it afterwards to a National Assembly for their information;

—that the Vietnamese citizen has lost the most sacred rights of liberty: liberty of life, liberty of belief and liberty of thought;

—Mr. Ngo dinh Diem has seen fit to increase his police forces to consolidate his family dictatorship instead of utilizing the aid of friendly powers to erect a healthy economy and assure the vital minimum to the population, and this without considering that a large part of the national budget has been diverted to their personal ends by his brothers and their closest collaborators;

—the present regime is bringing the country back to the darkest days of 1954. Again there is oppression, exploitation, and injustice; discontent has reached a high point among all the levels of the population. The extension of communist bases, spreading throughout the South, even to the outskirts of Saigon, constitutes a grave danger;

—South Vietnam must inevitably be absorbed by international communism if this situation persists;

—Having faith in the glorious future of a truly democratic Vietnam where each citizen would enjoy inviolable rights of freedom and liberty, I demand that Mr. Ngo dinh Diem prove his patriotism in fulfilling the aspirations of his people:

1. Let him dissolve the puppet National Assembly.

2. Let him relinquish his functions as President of the Republic, that the people may freely decide the future of the country.

If he will not do this, I have decided to return to the country and set in motion this struggle. My determination is based on the will of the oppressed people claiming their rights to liberty.

Since the present regime survives by grace of a certain number of foreigners who have been misled, I draw the attention of these last to the fact that the Vietnamese people consider them accomplices to the oppression, the injustice and the dictatorship.

In nine years of struggle against communism the Vietnamese people have maintained their position at the price

of sacrifices and heavy losses in human lives. This is irrefutable proof of their determination to play a role in the free world.

Before international opinion I accuse the Ngo dinh Diem regime of perfidy and dictatorship.

At the same time I appeal to the countries friendly to Vietnam to aid us in our struggle for justice and liberty, a struggle which, itself, will contribute to the maintenance of peace in Southeast Asia.

I shall personally present this declaration to the Ambassador of South Vietnam at his embassy, at 3 p.m. on March 10, 1960, with the request that he transmit it to Mr. Ngo dinh Diem.

Paris, March 8, 1960 (Signed) Brigadier General Duong van Due Commander of the National Order”

True to his word, Due stomped into the Vietnam embassy at 3:00 p.m. on March 10 and demanded to see the ambassador. The ambassador called the police; the police hustled Due out and passed his declaration on to the ministry of the interior. All that immediately resulted was a terse order from a French official who was annoyed by Due's allusion to "oppression, exploitation and injustice" in 1954, which was to say under the French. Due was told to keep still or he would be sent home to Diem and Nhu, the last thing Due wanted. He had been captured by the Vietminh while fighting under the French. Most men would rather die than go through that experience. Under the process which Ho chi Minh's specialists had perfected for reducing tough foreign legionnaires to human wrecks, Due was given the works. The man doing the "breaking" was none other than Joe Alsop's hero, Albert Pham ngoc Thao, then Ho chi Minh's intelligence chief. When Due delivered his declaration, Pham ngoc Thao was the right hand man and secret police chief of Ngo dinh Nhu.

For six years Due had served in Diem's army, forced to watch the Communist whom he had known as the man-breaker gain power. And Due needed no psychology book to tell him that men hate and distrust those whom they have broken. For six years Pham ngoc Thao, applying for Ngo Hinh Nhu the same methods he had practiced for Ho chi Minh, had also watched the officer who would get him some day if Thao did not get him first. In the end Thao held the field; Due delivered his declaration and thereafter existed on handouts from Vietnamese restaurants.

Shortly after General Due's startling declaration was deliv

ered out of the blue, Jean-Marc Dufour, the French Far East specialist who had been employed by USIS in Pnom Penh at the time of the February 1959 plot to depose the Cambodian monarchy, warned in La Nation Francaise: "Since the Chinese New Year, in February, the Vietminh have never ceased to gain ground. Murders succeed murders and ambushes succeed ambushes. The most recent and the most striking assassinations were those of the provincial governor of Vinh Long, the recruitment commander of Tan Uyen and the sports and youth leader of the same region. The number of assassinations of officials and police average ten a day. The Vietminh rebellion has become an organized military rebellion with a supreme command in the field, able to maneuver openly in battalion strength."

Next, on September 20, 1960, the European edition of the New York Herald Tribune broke the conspiracy of silence and published a letter written by a Vietnamese who signed himself General Thai-Son. Said he:

"All newspapers around the world and particularly those of the U.S. are aware of an unusual scandal—almost unique in the history of modern times—the control of a supposedly democratic country by a single family.

"The true structure of this government by family, the -most undemocratic and authoritarian in free Asia, is as follows:

1. At the top is the President himself: Ngo dinh Diem.

2. Brother Ngo dinh Nhu, advisor of the President, controls government, army, business, police, Assembly and Revolutionary party (Can-Lao), whose 70,000 underground members throughout the nation spend much of their time giving police information about their neighbors.

3. Brother Ngo dinh Luyen is the Ambassador to London, Tunis, Brussels and Bonn, and controls the funds of all these embassies.

5. Brother Ngo dinh Thuc is Roman Catholic bishop of Vinh Long and controls all churches in Viet Nam.

6. Mrs. Ngo dinh Nhu, pretty wife of Nhu, "First Lady of Diem's dynasty," controls all big business and secret funds.

7. The father of Mrs. Nhu, Mr. Tran van Chuong, is ambassador to Washington, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, and controls the funds of these embassies.

8. The mother of Mrs. Nhu is representative of Viet Nam

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in the UN and controls the licensing of commercial enterprises.

Diem's regime is supported by the U.S. (a million American dollars a day). It rules not through and for the people, but through his family and for said family.

And it is on this that the Communists mainly place their hopes. Each month, from 250 to 300 government officials and supporters are brutally murdered by Red guerillas.

Gen. THAI-SON

Saigon

Considering that Kennedy knew of all this, and much more of which the public was unaware, his appointment of Angier Biddle Duke to the post of chief of protocol appears a graceful way of collapsing American Friends of

Vietnam and getting both the organization's head and its most prominent member "out from under."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE SCRAMBLE TO GET OUT FROM UNDER

It was labor that emerged as the master of America's destiny and decider of foreign policy. Labor's decisions had been delivered with the ring of authority in the AFL-CIO's political organ, New Leader. Sometimes labor leaders themselves did the talking, or again it might be their scholastic front, Michigan State University. Policies changed, but as one policy disastrous for America was dropped for another one doomed to be worse, no note of doubt was ever permitted to creep into the New Leader*s line to America's unionized sheep.

On February 22, 1954, the New Leader published "How to Win in Indo-China" by David J. Dallin. Obviously the first move was to kick out the French. Then came the specious special issue of June 27, 1955, which we have mentioned, in which Austrian socialist Joseph Buttinger said Ho chi Minh was the man the West should have supported but, since Ho had been forced into the arms of the Communists by "French colonial policies," Diem was the man to back. The line was always "This is the way to win," but following a slowly changing spectrum of nuances, the solutions changed. The New Leader, which is to say American labor, and Michigan State University, however, were always side by side. And the trend was always downward.

As the bankruptcy of the policy of supporting a hated family instead of a country became more evident, the plunges of the losing gamblers became more desperate. On November 2, 1959, and again on December 7 the New Leader carried pro-Diem articles by Michigan State's Professor Wesley Fishel. Wolf Ladejinsky did his bit to perpetuate both Diem's reign and his own job through a New Leader article in 1960, while Far Eastern Survey and Pacific Affairs obediently printed the flood of "scholarly" articles being turned out by Michigan State, still under contract to train Vietnam's public administrators and police. Never did Fishel's group warn America of the danger on the horizon.

In mid-1959 agencies in Washington blocked the passport renewal of the author of this book for trying to do so. They

informed the French equivalent of FBI that the opposition in Vietnam had been formed and was being directed by Mr. du Berrier, and that said opposition's headquarters in Pnom Penh occupied a house rented in Mr. du Berrier's name. Since said oppostion was known to be without funds, American agents having helped Diem and Nhu cut off their resources, the American report went on to assert that Mr. du Berrier was believed to have acquired funds for the Diem opposition from an unnamed foreign power (Red China implied). Mr. du Berner's expulsion from France, it was hinted, would be appreciated. A disgusted French official passed the report on to the author with the laconic query, "Who is trying to get you?" Thirty minutes had sufficed to assure the French DST, the Direction de la Surveillance du Terriotoire (French equivalent of the FBI), that the American plaint was false.

On November 11,1960, came the revolt of the paratroopers. The drum-beating over Diem's forthcoming elections scheduled for April 9,1961, showed no abatement of official American enthusiasm for our man, but the boys on the inside, the small group of string-pullers who had run things as they pleased, were washing their hands of the results of the New Leader's old "How to Win" formulae. Henceforth Sol Levitas, editor of the labor publication in question, described the Saigon government as "an autocratic, corrupt and ineffective regime."

American labor's wandering "ambassador," Irving Brown, could not have failed to find the second page of Paris Presse of December 2, 1960, neatly folded on his desk for filing, with Alex Raynaut's report, "On South Vietnam Which Rots and Decomposes." Said Raynaut, "A woman, Madame Ngo dinh Nhu, is the Lucrezia Borgia of the regime. She concentrates the hatred of all the opposition to the Diem party." Brown was no fool; though the American public was not yet ready for such blunt truths, he knew it was time to drop a hot potato.

Out of East Lansing, Michigan, on February 18, 1961, came a UPI dispatch announcing that "the establishment of an African Language Center at Michigan State University has made the institution one of the few places in the U.S. where African languages can be learned under the teaching of expert linguists." The AP on the same date reported a parade through pouring rain at Michigan State—"to mourn the death of Patrice Lumumba." Of the late but unlamented Vietnam Project not a word. And the transfer to

Africa of official after official responsible for our disastrous Southeast Asia policy passed unnoticed.

To conceal from the duped American taxpayers the fact

that their much-touted experiment was sinking, and that the boys in the know were deserting it, drums kept on beating for the new "democratic" elections set for April. Again Diem picked his opponents, a 73-year-old Oriental faith healer named Ho phut Tran and a rich planter, a former friend of Ho chi Minh, named Nguyen dinh Quat.

"Communists lose a round to Col. Thao" was the way Joe Alsop hailed Diem's "victory" in the New York Herald Tribune of April 11, 1961. The Thao he was glorifying was Albert, Ho chi Minh's erstwhile intelligence chief. In the same April 11 issue Edgar E. Clark told Americans, "Pro-Western President Ngo dinh Diem won a surprising landslide victory in his bid for re-election for a five-year term. ... All Mr. Diem's critics, both here and abroad, cannot deny that the election was democratic. . . . The voting and counting were as straight as could be. There was nothing wrong with either so far as the beadiest-eyed observer could see."

On April 12 Joe Alsop gave the beast-become-hero Albert Pham ngoc Thao another plug in a column headed "April Fool for Col. Hung." Two days later, on April 14, a Herald Tribune editorial hailed the election outcome as a "Red Setback in South Vietnam." Joe Alsop was just warming up: His column in the same issue was "Col. Thao's War."

Time was in on it also. Time of April 21 told followers of the Luce line that Diem had responded to some sound advice from "lean, ex-communist Colonel Pham ngoc Thao" by handing Colonel Thao command of vital, rice-growing Kienhoa province. Thao got 83% of his voters to the polls." The report continued, " 'We tried a little propaganda on our own,' he [Thao] admits. 'We told the people that if they did not vote, they would have trouble getting jobs or help from the government.' " An oblique way of saying that American aid dangled before a suffering countryside bought Diem a victory. However, no letter pointing out this fact ever appeared in print in Time Magazine. Nor were Europe's down-to-earth comments ever passed on to the American public.

Paris Presse of April 4, screamed, "The communists have taken the offensive in South Vietnam," adding, "If the deterioration of public

institutions in South Vietnam is evident, the police system of the government is still solid enough to assure President Diem a victory next Sunday."

Figaro9s Saigon correspondent, Francois Nivolon, cabled on April 6, "Let's admit at once that the victory of President Ngo dinh Diem and his teammate Vice President Nguyen ngoc Tho is certain. The chances of their adversaries are non

existent. We can only deplore the fact that the opposition did not throw candidates of any importance into the battle. Both men are anti-communist and anti-neutralist but they are not supported by any of the known opposition movements."

Jean-Marc Dufour wrote in La Nation Francaise, the Paris weekly quoted by National Review on all subjects but South Vietnam, that the formality of Diem's reelection proved nothing but the perfect organization of his police. There was, however, Dufour admitted, something new in the recent campaign: an American public relations man, which led the Washington Post to exclaim that Diem had undertaken a handshaking tour "in the best American style."

"After that can one reasonably doubt the popularity of Ngo dinh Diem?" asked Mr. Dufour. The fly in the ointment, as he saw it, was that despite "the efforts of Dr. Wesley Fishel of Michigan State University and public relations man Harold Oram, the principal problem remained unsolved: While Diem was enjoying a promenade through the countryside and chatting with the villagers, armed bands numbering as many as 300 men were attacking the regular army." Since Diem commanded neither the loyalty of the army nor that of the country, Dufour concluded, "everything seems impossible: The opposition is reduced to exile by the police and to impotence by exile, which leaves only the communists in position to become Diem's heirs."

"Scrutator," commentator in the London Sunday Times of May 14, 1961, told British readers that President Ngo dinh Diem had mellowed "to a point where his electors no longer find it necessary to give him more votes than they can count heads. His American backing is more lavish than ever . . . yet his seat is becoming uncomfortable, the communists having begun to seep into his territory and to slaughter his officials at night." Scrutator added, "Suppose the Americans had intervened at the time of the Dien Bien Phu disaster, and had somehow reconquered all of Indo-China . . . they

would still have saddled themselves with the indefensible Mr. Diem and his family."

Why the Reporter decided to do a turnabout and publish Stanley Karnow's article, "Diem Defeats His Own Best Troops" in the issue of January 19, 1961, or how Kamow happened to write it, has never been explained. When Darrel Berringen's sugarcoated propaganda for Ngo dinh Diem appeared in the Reporter of September 20, 1956, editor Phil Horton had nothing but aloof disdain for anyone trying to talk sense to him on the subject. And Stan Karnow, then in the

Paris bureau of Time-Life, was too busy setting up a ski trip for the weekend to bother to talk to Dr. Nguyen ton Hoan when Hoan went to his office.

Victor Lasky, out of loyalty to his friend Harold Oram, or because Oram was paying him for every plug he could give the foundering Ngo dinh Diem, reached far out to work a boost for Diem into an article against Robert Welch and the John Birch Society. Syndicated by the North American Newspaper Alliance, Lasky's column, "Welch throws wild punches at Reds," appeared in The Indianapolis Star of April 11, 1961, two days after Diem's "reelection."

"How much does Welch really know about Asian affairs?" asked Lasky, whose own knowledge of Asia was derived from evenings spent at the bar of the Overseas Press Club with Diem's public relations huckster, fishing for a free trip to Saigon. Lasky wrote that Welch, once a year, "devotes his monthly American Opinion to a scoreboard of communist influence in over 100 nations. For each country he presents a percentage score on the degree of Red infiltration. What his yardstick is he does not say."

Actually, Welch did some explaining, which Victor Lasky omitted, and, studied in retrospect, without any distortions, Welch comes out much better than Lasky. For what American Opinion?s yearly "Scoreboard" attempted to estimate was not Communist infiltration but the percentage of power Communists would be able to throw into the streets in a given country under favorable conditions using all the forces, Communist or otherwise, that might be brought into their game.

Considering that President Kennedy himself admitted the Communist assassination of 4000 local officials in Vietnam in 1960, and authorities

such as Dr. Bernard Fall set the figure at closer to 13,000—in a country that had only 12,000 to 14,000 villages in all—the 70% to 90% estimate of Red strength which Lasky pooh-poohed was conservative. Buddhists, students, tribesmen of the high plateau regions, the army and the countryside awaited only an opportunity to end Diem's six years of abuse of power. And villages where officials remained alive were villages obedient to the Reds.

In March 1961 Vice-President Johnson took off for a junket to South Vietnam—a trip fraught with significance. With him were all the usual hangers-on of government and press, a sort of triumphant visit to a satrapy with all eyes and cameras focused on America's vice-president, who had been selected for the Kennedy ticket by a Russian-born labor leader named Dave Dubinsky. In the rear of the plane bearing Vice

President Johnson's entourage sat an unobtrusive little man in gray named Suffrage. He was president of the Retail Clerks' Union of America, which is an AFL-CIO affiliate.

Why should a labor union president accompany a vice-presidential junket to Vietnam? The question was never asked. At each stop the spotlight was focused on Lyndon Johnson. Officials awaited him, cameras clicked, honor guards were drawn up; no one noticed the little group that whisked Mr. Suffrage away for a meeting elsewhere, behind closed doors—to discuss what? Was Suffrage regimenting native labor opposition against Diem? Was Lyndon taking attention away from Suffrage while Vietnam labor told its story and AFL-CIO strengthened its hand to name Diem's successor? When the big plane turned its nose toward America on the homeward journey, the little labor leader in gray was back in his seat, as colorless and expressionless as ever, but back in Saigon word went out that a change was in the works.

Britain's liberal Observer Foreign News Service, provider of many of the feature articles Americans read in the New York Herald Tribune, filed a report out of Saigon by Dennis Bloodworth on June 7, 1961. It was the usual "We are winning" story, but its main objective was to swell the chorus of the Joe Alsop campaign to sell Albert Pham ngoc Thao. "Bold Experiment Tried by South Viet Colonel" was the way the European edition of the Herald Tribune headlined it, on June 8. A column of priceless publicity in one of America's largest papers followed, telling how, in his campaign to win confidence, Colonel Thao's first act on taking over Kien Hoa province was to release from 1200 to 1500 "suspects" arrested on

suspicion of aiding Communist guerillas. Nothing was said of Thao's record as torturer and intelligence chief for Ho chi Minh, nor his role as head of Nhu's secret police in filling Diem's prison with the anti-Communist opposition. In fact, the Bloodworth article continued, "To the astonishment and sometimes fury of his superiors he [Pham ngoc Thao] also set free some of the Viet Cong his men had captured, allowing them to walk out of prison camps—with their weapons . . . Colonel Thao has trained his men not to return fire when the Viet Cong open up on them, but quietly to note the position of the communists and encircle them." The Vietcong could not capture arms fast enough, so Thao was letting prisoners, personal friends perhaps, walk out with them. The order not to return fire was explained as a move "to ring the enemy for a mass capture"—which, alas, never took place.

While Lyndon Johnson provided a shelter for labor diplo

macy and Albert Phom ngoc Thao liberated captured Vietcong—allowing them to take their guns!—to prove that our side was not afraid of them, the intentions of America's new president were ambiguous. It is not easy to do a volte-face on a policy when one has been a vociferous member of the lobby supporting it. Kennedy began sending missions to Vietnam while he stalled for time, groping for an out. Strangely enough, one of the best reports on this period, written by an American in Saigon who signed himself "Z," appeared in the March 12, 1962, issue of the New Republic, but, like Stanley Kamow's article in the Reporter of January 19, 1961, it was rejected by conservative Americans out of distrust of the organ in which it appeared.

"Z" said: "Beginning with the mission of Vice President Johnson in March, 1961, followed in rapid succession by the Staley and [General] Taylor missions, Washington began to learn in a few weeks and months what had been available for it to know for the past six years: that a Communist-led and directed guerrilla movement, feeding on large-scale popular discontent in the villages and aided by North Vietnam (but to a far less extent than is said—this again is part of the new myth), was about to take over South Vietnam directly from under the feet of the Diem regime ... In Washington parlance, 'the town really hit the panic button.' A round-the-clock unit was set up on the seventh floor of the newest of the new State

Department buildings to co-ordinate all activities concerning Vietnam, and hotel space in Saigon became totally unavailable as an unending stream of visitors from Washington and [CINPAC], Commander-in-Chief Pacific Area Command, began to investigate the Vietnam situation for themselves.

"A brief flurry of hope followed departure from Saigon of General Taylor's mission. Although Taylor had been carefully screened from all Americans in Saigon whose views might have clashed with the official myths ... he had seen and learned enough to come through with a report which in all likelihood was to advocate some deep-seated political changes."

Obviously, the most important political change envisaged was the dumping of Nhu and his wife. Without them the country could still, just possibly, be rallied behind Diem. But there was not a hope. As "Z" described the Saigon reaction, "the government-controlled press of South Vietnam let loose against the U. S. a barrage of insults whose viciousness and inanity can only be matched by Peking or Havana (on particularly bad days). On November 24, 1961, Saigon's Thoi Bao (The Journal) printed an eight-column headline reading 'Republic of

Vietnam Guinea Pig For Capitalistic Imperialism—Is it not time to revise Vietnamese-American Collaboration?' A similar tack was taken by the other newspapers, and for awhile it looked as if the Moment of Truth had arrived on both sides . . . But nothing of the sort occurred: Washington simply and purely capitulated . . . Having thus abandoned all hope of 'standing up' to the Diem regime, Washington topped off its total surrender by sending the new foreign aid director, Fowler Hamilton, to Saigon in mid-January, 1962." And Hamilton, according to the Associated Press, was impressed by the strength, vigor and competence of the men he met.

Behind the scenes a more deadly power struggle than "Z" imagined was going on. Those in the know were aware that Diem could not agree to reforms, for Diem had had no final say as to what was going on for months, perhaps even the past two years. Gradually power had passed to Nhu, who, on the pretext of taking a burden off his brother's shoulders, had made the transition from advisor to ruler. Nhu was not going to submit to his own ousting. Nor was he about to launch pleas for Mike Mansfield to support the regime "for just a little longer," as he had in April of 1955. Secret negotiations with Ho chi Minh for a "neutral, American-free South

Vietnam" under himself had reached a stage where Nhu was convinced that America dared not cut loose and cared little if she did. Even while Nhu's treasonable negotiations were going on, however, the effects of Mr. Suffrage's road-paving under the shelter of Lyndon Johnson were being felt.

The junket to Saigon by a Professor Staley in June of 1961 was not to affect the long-term deterioration in Vietnam one iota, for, to put it in American beatnik terms, Staley was off on a strategic hamlet "kick". It was the age of the egghead in America, which Jacqueline Kennedy was later to compare with the brief, shimmering age of Camelot. For the small group of men who never under normal circumstances would have approached the center of power and who, after Kennedy, were never likely to do so again, the comparison was valid. To Staley, strategic hamlets were the answer, and the American taxpayer paid for Staley's folly in dollars while GI's and Vietnamese paid with their lives.

Then, in September, to the loud ballyhooing of radio, TV and press, came General Maxwell Taylor's plea for political reforms. But there was no communications media spotlight thrown on the mission of Irving Brown.

Mr. Irving Brown, AFL-CIO's roving ambassador who boasted of having travelled half a million miles "in the cause

of anti-Communism" (mostly sowing revolts in colonies that have since passed from allied rule to Communist), was dispatched on a Vietnam fact-finding trip for American labor. His confidential report dated November 27, 1961, ran to nine single-spaced typewritten pages and can be summed up in a few lines: The new man to back in South Vietnam is the Confederation of Vietnam Labor leader, Tran quoc Buu, described by Brown as "the most outstanding trade union leader and individual I met in Saigon." Brown added, "Buu still has the confidence of Diem but Buu, himself, has lost much of his confidence in Diem especially his entourage." Translated into plain language, "Buu is still trusted by the palace, so he can attack from the inside if we will get behind him."

The buildup of Buu started from that moment. The fall of Diem gained momentum, but the boys who selected Diem in the first place were determined to name his successor. "How to Win in Vietnam" would still be announced through New Leader magazine.

In the months between Suffrage's trip and Brown's, Ho chi Minh's "veterans of the Nam Bo" set up the scaffolding of their National Liberation Front in South Vietnam. In December 1961 a commando operation effected the liberation of left-wing lawyer named Nguyen huu Tho whom Diem had interned; and with Nguyen huu Tho as their president the new Red front prepared to rally under a banner of fake nationalism all the groups deprived of any other alternative by America's blind support of the Ngo dinhs. Among them was a group called The Patriotic and Believing Catholics.

Washington, however, ignored all this and remained preoccupied only with "support for Diem." One reason may have been, as Georges Chaffard explains in his book on that period, that Ambassador Frederick Nolting had made some feeble efforts to move Diem, but when he saw that he could not influence that stubborn chief of state he decided to become a friend of the Nhu's, to try to convince them. Instead, he became their tool.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
ENTER CABOT LODGE

The year 1962 broke over the dying country that had once been the rice bowl of Southeast Asia in another wave of Communist onslaughts. The obstinate Mandarin from Hue had moved from Gia Long Palace, the scene of his early struggles. February found Diem, Nhu, Madame Nhu, and Thuc (who was about to become archbishop of Hue, the Buddhist stronghold in the north), all living in Dinh Doc Lap Palace, which Diem had chosen as his presidential residence.

How aware the people of the CIA, the USIS, American aid, or the embassy were of the inroads the National Liberation Front was making, as one village after another embraced the Communists as liberators from the Ngo dinhs, is hard to say. A frightened officialdom had hustled Miss Sandra Davies out of Saigon on a couple of days' notice in 1958 and transferred her to the embassy in Manila on charges that "she was going native," which was a way of saying that she had established a rapport with Vietnamese and was beginning to learn what was going on. The clique tolerated only those who closed their eyes and parroted their myth.

Despite both Vietnamese and American censorship, the news seeped through. All Southeast Asia knew of Vietnam's jolting series of setbacks in the field in late February 1962. First the civil guard was mauled in three lightning actions. With the people of the countryside giving no warning to government troops, the Vietcong struck, inflicted heavy casualties, and after

each attack pulled out with a new haul of ammunition and weapons. Then at 6:50 a. m. on Tuesday, February 27, two air force lieutenants, Pham phu Quoc and Nguyen van Cu, instead of carying out the bombing mission south of Saigon to which they had been assigned, attacked the presidential palace. For fifty minutes they bombed and strafed Dinh Doc Lap. Diem was mysteriously warned and managed to get to his underground bunker just in time. Madame Nhu fell through a hole in the floor but came out with minor scratches and bruises.

Lieutenant Quoc was brought down by anti-aircraft fire,

but Cu, a brilliant young pilot who had received twenty-three months of training in the U. S., escaped to Cambodia, where he announced that the airforce could no longer support Diem's dictatorship and that other revolts were in store. "The Vietnamese people and elements of the army detest Diem's regime and family," said Cu.

Diem s reply was to ground the air force and launch another purge. Through the directorate general of information, a series of communiques denounced the "reactionaries as well as the Communists" who were responsible for the outrage. With "reactionaries" a hint of new scapegoats came into the picture for the first time: There was more than a suspicion that Diem and Nhu, without coming out and saying so, were aiming at the Americans. But what Americans? The old intelligence, information, aid and embassy combine of the past, or someone new?

Probably the best indication of who was trying to get the Kennedy administration "out from under" is to be found in James Reston's column which appeared in the New York Times on June 18, 1964, more than two years later. Reston wrote, "With the possible exception of Cuba, Vietnam has arrested the Attorney General's attention more than any other foreign policy problem. Under President Kennedy he was a leader in the decision to mount a counter-insurgency policy in that country. He was involved in all the maneuvers that led to the Administration's open opposition to the Diem regime in Saigon ..."

"Vietnam is the third of the momentous tests in the Cold War. The U. S. proved in Korea that it could deal with a major limited war. It proved in the Cuban crisis that it could deal with the threat of a nuclear war, but the challenge of subversive warfare has not yet been met and this is the test of

Vietnam . . . More than almost anybody else in the Administration, he [Robert Kennedy] has been fascinated by the techniques and possibilities of counter-insurgency, has been involved in Vietnam and its problems for the past three years, and has the prestige and authority to pull together what is now a divided and rather confused team of State Department Defense Department and Central Intelligence operators on the scene."

In other words, for years Jack Kennedy, as senator, had obediently read from senate floor and lecture platforms any paper put in his hands by Arthui Goldberg or Angier Biddle Duke s humming Diem lobby. But after he reached the White House his brother Bobby took over—described by Paris Presse

as having "all the sentimentality of a panther" and having "shed his last tear at the age of seven." Bobby's constant dread was an insurrection against the Rostow-Weisner-Schlesinger programs of his brother. Counter-insurgency—how to quell an insurrection if in power or win one if on the outside—became Bobby's passion, and South Vietnam his testing ground for experiments. Irving Brown's late 1961 recommendation that labor boss Buu be taken up as America's man had no doubt joined the other papers in Bobby's hands; with all the realism of his law of the jungle mentality, he read the signs and, whether the public was prepared for it or not, told his brother it was time to unload.

To Bobby, Lieutenant Cu's and Lieutenant Quoc's bombing of the palace was no isolated incident. The "reactionaries whom Diem and Nhu denounced after the bombing were in the White House. Whether Bobby and his brother still thought the war in South Vietnam could be won, or had any intentions of trying to win it, is one of the secrets locked in the breasts of men noted for their subterfuge.

Whatever Bobby thought privately, it was not yet time to tell America that the years of ballyhoo had been false and the big experiment was on the skids. That Diem's family knew the end was near became evident in the summer of 1962 when Diem's niece, the wife of Tran trung Dung, former secretary of state for defense, visited Paris. Sitting in a restaurant in Montparnasse, surrounded by her countrymen avid for news from home, she replied to their questioning, "How can I be optimistic? The people detest my family. One of these days we will all be lynched. I am making

plans to take refuge in Paris before it is too late. I ask myself what the Ngo family is waiting for that they do not get out of there before they are all massacred." (Indochine . . . Dix A ns de L'Independence—Indochina . . . Ten Years of Independence ... by Georges Chaffard. Calmann-Levy, 294 pages.)

Less informed than Madame Tran trung Dung, America's U. S. Operations Mission beavers were still going full speed ahead, enjoying the heady experience of moving families from where they wanted to be and shutting them up in villages which the Vietcong picked off at will. It was their show, and they enjoyed every minute of the spending and propaganda spree accompanying Mr. Staley's "strategic hamlets." A new social system was created. Those showing most enthusiasm for the hamlets formed a new, favored class at the top. Immediately after them came their families and relatives. At the bottom were the nha-ques, the poor peasants for whom the social revo

lution was supposedly being carried out. American military chiefs in South Vietnam had nothing to say about the defense of what was really America's do-it-big equivalent of the 1954 guard towers of the French, large enough to take in a village. These strategic hamlets were under the "economic and financial adviser to the Government of South Vietnam," i.e., the man who allotted dollar aid. Diem's civil guard was also under him.

All the ingredients of a first class explosion were in the crucible but still, out of cynicism—determination to tell the public what it wanted to hear, reluctance to backtrack and admit eight years of guilt, or maybe a forlorn hope that a miracle might yet appear and save them—America's mass communications media continued the hoax. The leaders were Joe Alsop and Marguerite Higgins, whom Diem and Nhu had accorded preeminence through invitations to the palace and photographs taken with the president. (Such photographs became tangible evidence of authority, and on Diem's and Nhu's continued importance hinged each name-dropping apologist's claim to stature. Madame Suzanne Labin wrote in the Washington World of July 24, 1962, "Nothing, indeed, could justify a revolt of the masses in South Vietnam. Anyone wandering round the country, as I have done several times, can testify to a miraculous improvement."

Though all Vietnam was waiting for an upheaval without knowing exactly how or when, reassuring statements continued to flow from "travelers" of supposedly independent means who were just wandering around, but were always preceded by warnings over Asia's age-old bamboo wireless that it would be dangerous to approach them and suicidal to tell them anything the police might not like. If Americans were taken in by such statements, not so the Vietcong.

Through the labor unions of Western Europe and a London group headed by a certain Labor member of Parliament Hanoi was kept informed of the Kennedy team's groping for a way out. The question was whom they would back in place ot Diem. Hanoi jumped to the conclusion that it could only be Nguyen ton Hoan, since he was the only opposition leader with a party. Accordingly, on September 27, 1962, the French Communist daily Humanite turned its heavy artillery on Hoan as the "war-monger" and "puppet of the Americans." The de Gaulle press stated that Hoan was unacceptable because he was for continuation of the war. Apparently both Paris and Hanoi feared that logic might triumph over no-winism in Washington. The fear was unfounded.

ENTER CABOT LODGE

On January^, 1963, came the rude jolt when regiment after regiment of the Vietcong, recruited and trained on the spot, surged from nowhere out of the delta heart of Mytho province to defeat a Vietnamese national army equipped with American 105 mm. artillery, amphibian craft, helicopters and an air force. Placed before the Kennedy team in Washington, the debacle was called the Battle of Ap-Bac. Grim as it was, it did not deter American advisors from arming Vietcong guerrillas, on the theory that "infiltrators are among the best targets for conversion to fighters against Communists." (Washington Post, January 25, 1963). "The United States has armed some Viet Cong sympathizers along with anti-Communist tribesmen in a bold gamble to gain control of the highlands in South Vietnam," gushed an AP dispatch out of Saigon on January 24, 1963. The report added, however, that the experiment had not always been successful, as in the case of Plei Mrong where thirty-nine defenders had been killed. So it was admitted that the defenders of the strategic hamlet of Plei Mrong paid for an unpardonable stupidity no high school freshman would have committed—and to the tune of a basketful of severed hands, left behind as a thank-you.

"A highly informed source said that 50 Viet Cong sympathizers who aided the attack have been arrested," AP unblushingly continued, "But many probably will be released after stern reprimands and allowed to return to their villages."

While military men scurried between Washington and Saigon, with plans for reestablishing a military balance, and the AFL-CIO's policy formers pushed Irving Brown's recommendations, the crisis that secret police and American dollars had staved off for nine years was rapidly approaching. Its scene: Hue, the feudal seat of the Ngo dinhs. Monsignor Ngo dinh Thuc, archbishop of the diocese, doyen of the episcopate in Vietnam, chancellor of the University of Dalat, was preparing a sacerdotal jubilee to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession in the church. May 5 was the date set. Diem himself was to attend; therefore Thuc and his brother, Can, planned to turn the celebration into a political manifestation for the family.

Businessmen complained that they were shaken down foi contributions. With each cash donation a message of congratulation was expected. From all directions the non-spontaneous expressions of good will poured in. One, however, which had been expressly solicited failed to appear. Ngo dinh Can demanded of the venerable Thich tinh Khiet what had happened to his telegram. Khiet, president of the Association

of Vietnamese Buddhists, whose spiritual fief was also Hue, replied that he was not sending one. (The refusal was not a mark of hostility to the Roman Catholic religion; under other circumstances Khiet would gladly have added his fraternal felicitations to the others, but he knew that his message would be used politically as proof of the Buddhist superior's satisfaction with the Ngo dinhs.)

Georges Chaff ord observed (Indochine-Dix A ns de L'Independence) that Ngo dinh Can was not in the habit of pardoning. Others claim that it was at Archbishop Thuc's request that Dfem banned the display of Buddhist emblems. In any case, Thuc's revenge came next day in the form of an order on the eve of the celebration of Buddha's 2,005th birthday that no Buddhist flags or religious emblems should be displayed. The crowd began to manifest its displeasure; still Thich tinh Khiet urged his followers to remain calm.

On May 8, the date of Buddha's birthday, Dr. Eric Wulff, a thirty-nine-year-old German from Fribourg University strolled among the crowd milling around the Hue radio station at 9:30 m the hot, humid evening. Accompanied by one of his students, Wulff enjoyed the festive air. Several thousand people were massed in the streets to hear the speeches that always had been simultaneously broadcast and transmitted over loudspeakers. Suddenly a monk's voice came over the air, announcing that the ceremony had been banned by the government. A wave of surprise and indignation went through me crowd. "Remain calm," the voice of the monk continued. The provincial governor is coming to discuss the matter."

A few minutes later the governor, a Buddhist, arrived A monk asked the crowd to applaud him and clear a passage, which they obediently did. Automatically tension subsided. About fifteen minutes after the governor entered the radio building, Dr. Wulff heard the sound of motors and turned to

*«,fTrJafmored cars enter the §arden- His student told him. We had better get out of here." Others apparently had the same idea. As they approached one of the exits of the garden Wulff heard the crack of automatic weapons. People threw

themselves on the ground. Wulff and the student ran for their lives.

A little later, with another German doctor Wulff went to the hospital where fifteen wounded people were being treated.

A nurse suggested that he look in the morgue. Eight dead, one woman and seven children, ranging from seven to fifteen years, reposed on the slabs, partially decapitated by heavy machinegun fire. Later it was learned that Commander Dang Sy, the

governor's Catholic assistant, under orders from Ngo dinh Can was responsible for the massacre while his superior was in the radio building, supposedly negotiating.

The mob had had its sight of blood, and from that day, with its senseless machine-gunning in the radio station garden, there was no turning back. On May 12, Buddhist leaders addressed a petition to the government bearing five demands: liberty of religious meetings and activities; granting of the same status to the Buddhist religion as that enjoyed by the Catholics by virtue of Ordinance 10 of the constitution; immediate cessation of all

persecution of the Buddhists; suppression of the law forbidding the showing of Buddhist flags and symbols; complete indemnity for victims of the May 8 massacre and punishment of those responsible.

On May 15 Diem received a Buddhist delegation dispatched to Saigon to beg consideration of their petition, none of the demands of which were unreasonable. But Diem ignored them. By May 30 nothing had been done. Then started the hunger strikes and the protest marches around Hue's Tu Dam pagoda.

If Diem had appeared conciliatory on May 15, it was only to gain time, and perhaps to placate the more apprehensive of the Americans. In reality he was convinced that he had won and the Buddhist demands would be forgotten. On June 2 a personal emissary from the palace arrived in Hue with orders tor firmer repression. Out of the propaganda machine in Saigon flew the official version of the Hue machine-gunning. It was all

Communist propaganda. , u.

Frederick Nolting, the American ambassador, backed ms friends in the presidential palace with a statement that during his two and a half year stay he had seen no reiigious persecution. The Intersect Committee for the Defense of Buddhism replied with a communique stating that "Mr. Nolting should have been in Central Vietnam these past five years if he wanted to see how frequent were the cases of persecution of whic the Buddhists were victims, and these acts in the name o legality, almost always by administrative and military °nlcl^s who were Catholic." Few press services transmitted tne

Buddhist reply. „ A . r

It was illegal, said the government, to fast as a sign ot protest. Barbed wire barricades went up overnight around Hue's principal pagodas. On June 3 the students went into the streets to protest against the barbed wire. The barricades stayed, and a fury of anti-government slogans and placards resulted. Then the troops went into action. Dr. Wuffi noted that the soldiers were carrying bottles containing a dark brown

liquid, which they threw into the crowd. On breaking, they gave off a cloud of toxic gas. Dr. Wulff counted sixty-two victims with second and third degree burns accompanied by stomach and larynx convulsions and a fall in blood pressure. Many of the victims were blinded. Thirty-six hours later those burned by the gas were rounded up by the police, so Wulff was

never able to ascertain how many of the burns were fatal or whether the effects were temporary or permanent. Who, if anybody, treated the victims Wulff never knew, nor was he able to learn the source of the gas. Whether it was left over from the Japanese occupation, a counter-insurgency arm being tried by Bobby Kennedy's experimenters, or a gift from John Richardson's hated CIA team, no one ever knew.

Paris papers accorded a full page to Dr. Wulff's testimony, notably Candide of August 21, 1963. Paris Presse of August 17 gave the gas story half a page, while the Washington Post gave Wulff a small comer of an inner page on September 24, without mentioning the gas victims at all. To infer that Wulff did not mention the victims while he was in Washington is to insult the American public's intelligence.

The next big question: Who was responsible for ordering a gas attack when by a simple gesture of conciliation Diem could have avoided, temporarily at least, the tragic train of events to follow? Americans in the vicinity of Richmond, Virginia, of which Ambassador Nolting is native, showed that regional loyalty was stronger than distrust of a Kennedyappointed ambassador: They accepted Nolting's whitewash of his friends.

Dr. Wulff testified (Candide, August 21, 1963) that officials, anxious to prove their loyalty to the ruling family, refused or delayed any authorization demanded by the monks. "On the other hand," he wrote, "I am able to state that the Catholic Church enjoyed exceptional favors. I was able to buy in the Hue market such foodstuffs as oil, com and cheese marked 'NOT TO BE SOLD OR EXCHANGED ... A GIFT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.' Such foods, turned over to Catholic organizations to be distributed gratis through the country, were sold to swell the cash reserves of the organizations. From an official in the forestry department I learned that wood cut by the army was sold by [Archbishop Thuc's] Catholic organizations. Examples abound. Thuc, brother of the President, had exclusive control of the importation and sale of school-books, which turned out to be both a profitable monopoly and an effective means of censorship.

"Most striking, however, was the fact that this policy had

the opposite of the desired effect. With a bit of good sense it could have been foreseen. Instead of weakening the Buddhists, such acts strengthened

them. A re-awakening of Buddhism resulted. Relations between monks and the people became more intense. First the pagodas regained their ancient roles as centers of spiritual leadership, then they began to adapt themselves to the transformation that had taken place under Ngo dinh Diem. About a year before the crisis they began to create a student movement, which Diem accepted with bad grace. This autocrat regarded any force independent of himself as a threat, which led him to crush and declare outlaw the sects in the south and all political opposition . . . Even more virulent than Diem was his sister-in-law, the beautiful Madame Nhu, who exercises strong influence on the Vietnamese government. She publicly called the monks 'traitors and assassins' when they were peaceful . . . Thus there surged forth in Asia a religious fanaticism which Europe had forgotten since the Middle Ages and which in no time began to disturb the Vatican."

Father Vincent S. Kearney, writing in America magazme of September 7, 1963, concerning the events that followed, stated that "in all probability, direct responsibility for the Hue affair can be laid at the door of Ngo dinh Can. This man has no official status in the government. Yet he rules Central Vietnam like a Chinese warlord. It is quite possible that he gave orders for the crack-down on the demonstrations at Hue without realizing the consequence . . . The government s handling of the Buddhist crisis is merely a symptom of the political malaise affecting the country. South Vietnam is an ivory-tower dictatorship operating in total isolation from the people it rules. It is actually more unpopular than the colonial regime of the deposed Emperor Bao Dai. For it demands much more of the people and gives them less."

Father Francis J. Buckley wrote in the same magazine that "the major motive for the repressive acts of the government towards the agitation of the General Association of Buddhists is not hostility towards Buddhism but unwillingness to accept criticism from any source."

Georges Menant (Paris Match, November 23, 1963) in his expose of the delineation of power among the Ngo dinhs and each member's role in the family monopoly that resulted, places the responsibility on Diem and Thuc. "To Diem went the power," wrote Monsieur Menant, "to Nhu the police, to his wife the corruption and the deals, to Luyen diplomacy and to Can the traffic in rice. Religion was the domain of Thuc,

the archbishop, with his vast landholdings and personal residence surrounded by a tower of anti-aircraft batteries. But the cardinal's hat was not the extent of Thuc's ambition. Monsignor Thuc intended to become Pope. Nothing less.

"It is the custom of the Vatican," Menant continued, "to choose the Supreme Pontiff from among the prelates of a country where the Catholic majority is absolute. This is why Diem published official statistics pretending that Vietnam was 70% Catholic, 20% Buddhist and 10% diverse sects. The claim might have continued had an apostolic delegate not arrived on the scene in the midst of a Buddhist celebration and had said delegate not observed that, in his opinion, considering the Buddhist oriflammes along his route, the 70% figure should apply to the faithful of the pagodas. Diem was furious. The flying of Buddhist banners was forbidden and the immutable mechanism of repression that led to monks burning themselves in public was in motion."

The Voice of America gave only the official government explanation of events in Hue: It was all a Vietcong provocation.

On June 11 the monk Tich quang Due burned himself alive in the center of Saigon. Other monks, including a woman adept who was none other than the mother of Prince Buu Hoi, the friend of Miss Ellen Hammer who was then ambassador to several African countries, threatened to do likewise. While Buu Hoi was racing home to dissuade his mother, Diem and Nhu set up one of their fake "spontaneous" demonstrations of support. This time army veterans, supplied with trucks and sound equipment by the government, had their way cleared by police as they threatened to storm a pagoda. America was shocked.

Diem and Nhu were more annoyed than alarmed by the whole thing. To placate America more than the Buddhists, they sent Vice-President Nguyen ngoc Tho, himself a Buddhist, to try to soothe his coreligionists. Tho knew what a narrow margin of action he had, but he did his best. On June 15 he announced that the government would respect the liberty of the Buddhists, and release the monks and their followers who had been arrested, but that it would not admit responsibility for the massacre or the use of poison gas at Hue. The official version still blamed everything on the Vietcong.

If Diem still seemed to be conciliatory, it was only in appearance. The persecutions, instead of ceasing, were stepped up. Pagodas were encircled, monks harassed and students arrested. Dr. Wulff later testified that the

police tortured one of his students, Phan dinh Binh, to extract his signature to a

paper accusing the Buddhist superior of working for the Communists. Monks were tortured to extract similar confessions. When a German colleague of Dr. Wulff was finally permitted to see the tortured student, he was unrecognizable. Four German doctors then officially protested the government actions and its refusal to permit the treatment of those burned by gas. When they were still prevented from fulfilling their mission as doctors, they decided to leave the country.

Why Diem and Nhu persisted with their repressive measures rather than trying to ease the tension is hard to explain. Some say Diem was convinced that he was winning and was determined not to lose face. Others claim that Nhu counted too heavily on the support of his friend, CIA chief John Richardson, who to date had never failed him. Ambassador Nolting, living in his ambassadorial ivory tower, may also have had something to do with it, for one must bear in mind that under Nhu's efficient informer system, which pulled in any men except Nhu's who tried to contact Americans, and with American officials willing to point out to the police any bearer of antiDiem information, Nolting's chances of knowing the true state of aflairs were very poor indeed.

While Buddhists, students and opposition groups attacked America because of Nolting's blind support of the Ngo dinhs and the Ngo dinhs charged America with inciting revolts, who should suddenly come to the fore again in New York but Joseph Buttinger, still meddling in Vietnam affairs. One would think that the bitter experience with Diem would have taught the ardent whitewasher of Ho chi Minh a lesson, but not at all. On June 29, 1963, Mr. Buttinger presided over a meeting in New York to decide "the policy that America should follow in South Vietnam."

Kennedy, looking around for someone to replace Nolting and rid him of the old policy, which was complete support of the Ngo dinhs, saw Henry Cabot Lodge sitting in Paris as head of a little-publicized organization called The Atlantic Institute: A bright idea struck the president. He had no time to prepare the public for a volte-face. Diem had lost two-thirds of his country, and the rest was about to disintegrate in a great burst of spontaneous combustion. Something drastic had to be done in a hurry.

Better to send a Republican to do it, and Lodge was the only Republican who would have taken the job.

Lodge prepared to leave the sinecure where he had been drawing up plans for an international currency in which the American dollar would be submerged, for advancement of socialist one-worldism through the destruction of colonies, and

for American entry into a regional super-state. Suave, Englishspeaking General de Souzy, philosophically reflected, At last he [Lodge] is getting to Indochina. When the war ended in Europe, he was with General Devers. Roosevelt and Stalin had agreed at Teheran to run us [the French] out of the Far East. Washington was already backing Ho chi Minh, and Lodge asked to be parachuted into Indochina. There was never any doubt which side he would be on."

A frenzied race with destiny seemed to seize all concerned in Saigon as the date of Lodge's arrival approached. Like the river above Niagara, the stream of events in Saigon gained momentum and swept all before it as it approached the falls. Already the inner palace coup d'etat had taken place: Diem no longer could have dumped his brother if he had wanted to, for Nhu had assumed command and in a wild drive to end resistance before Lodge's arrival had stepped up the massive arrests of students and raids on pagodas by American-armed special forces. A small dissident Buddhist group was hastily organized and accorded official recognition, to convince America that Diem had Buddhist support. Likewise, a fake student front was formed to issue protestations of fidelity for publication in Gene Gregory's Times of Vietnam. When American officials tried to exonerate the Vietnamese army of responsibility for shooting into the crowd, Nhu cunningly wrung a statement of solidarity from the generals.

On August 5 a twenty-year-old monk soaked himself in gasoline and burned himself at Phan Thiet, shortly after one of the country's most respected authors had committed suicide on the eve of arrest. On August 16 a 71-year-old monk burned himself in Tu Dam pagoda in Hue. Then came the brutal raids on the pagodas and Madame Nhu's arrogant exclamation that if fifty monks barbecued themselves she would clap her hands.

On August 25, troops drove trucks into the demonstrators in Saigon, killing and maiming as they went. At the same time Diem and Nhu multiplied the demonstrations intended to fool the Americans. On August 31a monster parade was organized with some 10,000 marchers slowly filing

through Saigon to counter, with their banners of loyalty and the impressiveness of their number, the growing climate of hate. What stood out throughout this force was the Hitlerism organization behind it. Nhu's Republican Youth in their dark blue uniforms, Madame Nhu's Women's Solidarity Movement, the League of Civil Servants—all paid by Diem and Nhu—and the lesser organizations which they controlled, made up the parade.

At this point a phenomenon of American shallow-pan

thinking appeared in all its fatuous might to provide an objectlesson for political science professors for years to come, a lesson that should throw much light on America's decline.

Madame Nhu was accused of throwing oil on the fire by Gerard Marin of Paris' Figaro. London's Economist (September 14, 1963) agreed that "a continued policy of repression by the regime could cause a disastrous dash rather than a drift toward communism by the disillusioned populace," as indeed it did. Madame Nhu, the pampered woman who all her life, by one means or another, had attained everything her heart desired, or made a scene that shook high heaven, found herself despised by the world. Her father turned against her and resigned from his post as ambassador in Washington, stating that she was mad with power. Long-suffering Vice-President Tho resigned from office and shaved his head. Word that Madame Nhu's way of dealing with the monks would be to beat them ten times as hard had traveled around the world when Vietnam's "First Lady" took off for the International Parliamentary Conference in Belgrade. There Senator Margaret Chase Smith introduced her to Teddy Kennedy, stating "She's quite a gal."

The Belgrade sojourn started on September 11. From Belgrade Madame Nhu went to Paris, where she replied to a query about how the war was going at home, "It is near its end. Only a handful of pirates are keeping it alive." As she threw out anti-French and anti-American invectives in her press conference at the Vietnamese embassy, French police held several hundred hostile Vietnamese at bay in the streets.

On October 5, two days before Madame Nhu's arrival in New York, the sixth suicide by fire in South Vietnam made headlines. Before igniting himself, the monk Quong Huang wrote to Diem, "To you, Mr. President,

who sing the praises of liberty and democracy, I address these last words of a man who is about to die that he might at least cry the truth."

Diem was unperturbed; to the end he refused to see or hear. Unconcerned, he opened the first session of the new national assembly, elected by the same police state methods as all the others, and announced that the Buddhist movement had been orchestrated "by communist agents, with the complicity of foreign elements." And this was the refrain Madame Nhu bore to America. The reversal of American opinion that followed would have been called a miracle, had there been any truth m the premise on which it was based. Overnight, on nothing but the word of a woman whose statements Richard Starnes (New York World-Telegram, October 17, 1963) described as

a "charming torrent of half-truths, double-talk, Oriental Goldwynisms and an occasional out-and-out whopper," the forces in America dedicated to sound policy and common sense swung, en masse, to the support of Madame Nhu.

For over eight years, while America's press and government had lied blatantly in the extolling of this woman, her family and the deteriorating war in South Vietnam, barely a handful of the fringe resentful of being described as lunatic had ever questioned the veracity of the news they were getting. When the culprits did a turnabout to escape the consequences of their fraud, Americans, who should have held them accountable, set out in their infatuation with Madame Nhu to prove that the very clique they were attacking had been right.

Well-meaning citizens who, if asked to put all they knew about Vietnam on paper could not have filled a sheet, were ready to go down fighting for what they "felt," simply because, for entirely different reasons, Madame Nhu was attacking the Washington administration which they as conservatives distrusted. The spoiled brat of the Chuong family became their darling.

On her arrival in New York, accompanied by her daughter, Madame Nhu went to the Barclay Hotel, at 111 East 48th Street, the same hotel where Vo Lang and this author descended that April day eight years before as bearers of "fresh, important information" to keep American support behind Diem through "just this last crisis." A host of such emissaries had passed through New York on their way to Washington in the intervening

years, but gradually this technique, like all ploys, suffered from the law of diminishing returns and at the end of the road faced bankruptcy.

It was then that Diem and Nhu played their big card, the woman who had charmed embassy officials and CIA operators alike into underwriting the dying regime through all its vicissitudes. So deeply was Charge d'Affaires Randolph Kidder involved, in the eyes of Southeast Asia, that by the time his assignment to the American embassy in Saigon ended he was never referred to by name but always as "Madame Nhu's man in the American embassy." There is no IBM machine to calculate the cost to America of what the Paris diplomatic weekly Aux^ Ecoutes (Novembei 8, 1963) headlined as Madame Nhu's use of "eroticism in the service of politics."

When Madame Nhu reached America for her tour that was to take her from coast to coast, through 12 cities for at least 17 local or national radio and TV appearances, 17 lectures and 15 lunches or dinners, Randolph Kidder was not there to

greet her. He had been sent on a trip around the world, "inspecting U. S. embassies." Angier Biddle Duke rented Mr. Kidder's house on Foxhall Road, in Washington, for the time he would have to be away.

Back in Vietnam things were going from bad to worse. On Octobei 19, 150 miles from Saigon, the national army had suffered its most humiliating defeat since Ap-Bac. in the course of it thirteen Americans were killed or wounded.

On October 26 Diem entertained the UN fact-finding mission, wnich he had isolated and whose movements Nhu's secret police were shielding as though they were contagious. The occasion was the eighth anniversary of the police-state referendum so admired by Senator Mansfield which had deposed Bao Dai and made Diem president. Next day another monk burned himself near Saigon's Catholic cathedral. The 28th of October brought another smashing military defeat in the delta, but the heavy conspiracy of censorship, both Vietnamese and American, prevented all this from ever reaching the American people.

During this period Cabot Lodge was giving parties in honor of Vietnamese officers. Colonels and generals began gathering on the ambassador's tennis court. When Diem wanted to see him, Mr. Lodge was

always too busy, “which was more and more true,” observed Georges Menant. (Paris Match, November 23, 1963)

Sensing that a storm was approaching, that Washington’s unquestioning support was slipping, Diem humbled himself to the point of offering to go to the embassy himself. “Impossible, Monsieur le President,” replied Mr. Lodge on the telephone. “You know that would be contrary to protocol.”

Nhu, the real master of the country, had already long been negotiating with the Communists. Joe Alsop, his greatest apologist and sycophant, went so far as to admit in the Washington Post of September 21 that Nhu had received “overtures” from the North Vietnamese, from which Alsop exonerated him by calling them “French-sponsored.” When it was all over, and denial of Nhu’s perfidy no longer possible, Alsop wrote on May 15, 1964, that “the unbalanced Nhu had begun negotiations for a deal with the North Vietnamese communists in the last months before his death.” And again Alsop adroitly evaded responsibility for his nine years of fawning praise by adding that “a secret French intrigue” was responsible—and, besides Nhu had changed.

So, actually, in the fall of 1963, while Nhu negotiated with the Reds behind our backs, his fiery wife insulted the intelli

gence of America’s conservatives with wild statements about the fight she and her husband were waging against communism. The war is being won, she said. Stay with us just a little longer! To please Americans who distrusted the Kennedy administration, she added, “One does not need an enemy if one has America for a friend!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE THE EXPLOSION

South Vietnam’s elegantly gowned first lady with the vicious tongue paused in Chicago on October 23, 1963, to telephone her husband, whose special forces had just clubbed and arrested a few hundred more Vietnamese clamoring for his ousting. (What lay in store for those arrested the Saigon public knew only too well. Many had brothers and cousins in the army and air force.)

“When are you coming back?” Nhu asked his wife.

“Around the 29th. I’ll come by way of Japan.”

“I’ll come to meet you.”

Be careful that they don't think you are running away." It was no facetious remark. Paris Presse had reported as far back as September 1 that the Ngo dinhs were packing their treasure.

Nhu made no reply. Four days later he called his wife in San Francisco. They discussed her forthcoming operation for a cyst on the eye. (Gossip had it that she was having wrinkles removed.) Nhu advised her to go back to Los Angeles for the operation.

"Are you coming to meet me in Japan?" she asked.

"No."

"Why?"

"You yourself told me not to come."

No. I said not to come if conditions were unfavorable Are they?"

"I'm not coming," was all Nhu said. His wife, later, said that she sensed that his confidence in himself was slipping. Actually Nhu and Diem were still convinced that they would come out on top, for was not American aid still pouring into the country? Up in Dalat an Institute of Nuclear Research was inaugurated on October 30. Heads of International Pipe and Ceramics Co. of East Orange, New Jersey, were rubbing their hands over a $5,600,000 order for a fifteen-mile pipeline from the Dong Nai River to Saigon. The Hydrotechnic Corporation of New York was racing to complete a $7,144,000 water-treating plant for Saigon, while a $9,207,700 sewage disposal system

was also under construction. How generous was the nation that, after World War II, denied its own citizens passports until they could pay for food furnished them in Japanese prison camps!

Joe Alsop insists that the Communist offensive was slowed down during this period because of the negotiations going on between them and Nhu; others have reasoned that Ho chi Minh wanted to give America time to complete the fine roads and installations we were preparing for him. Again, it may have been that the offensive did not let up at all, that censorship alone was responsible for the illusion that our side was holding firm.

On October 31 four companies of the American-paid special forces with which Nhu had maintained his grip on the capital were moved out of Saigon to go through the motions of opposing the Vietcong. This, Nhu had been

assured by his friends on the American team, would permit them to resume paying the $300,000 a month he had been receiving for their support. To offset the temporary loss of the four companies, Diem called in some 10,000 “loyal” troops and placed them under the command of his military governor, General Ton that Dinh, for Diem and Nhu were convinced that such a show of force would discourage any plotters.

Admiral Felt, U. S. commander in the Pacific, made his farewell call at the palace at 11:30 a. m., accompanied by Ambassador Lodge, to say good-bye to the president before returning to America. Lodge had been scheduled to leave the same day, but at the last minute announced that his trip had been postponed till the following Saturday.

“My services inform me,” Diem told his visitors, “that there are rumors of a movement being prepared against me. No doubt they are only trial balloons being launched by irresponsible agents of your CIA.”

Lodge and the admiral made no reply. While they were at the palace, all of the generals in the area who were considered “Diem men” were arriving at the headquarters of the general staff for a very special luncheon. General Le van Ty, the old fox who had betrayed General Hinh in September 1954, and served as emissary between the reoels and the palace in November 1960, had been smart enough to know long in advance that something was afoot and to get out of the capital “for reasons of health.” This left in command forty-six-year-old General Tran van Don, a corps commander who had had some success against the Communists but who had been removed from field command by Nhu in December 1962 because he was

suspected of being one of the officers who wanted reforms in Saigon as a prime requisite to winning the war.

Don had summoned Diem’s generals for the luncheon and conference, and at 1:30 he calmly told them that the army was seizing power and that they were under arrest.

Diem and Nhu were taking their siesta in the palace as this was going on. The chief of the surete had phoned Nhu earlier, when the troop movements started that morning, but Nhu reassured him. “Don’t worry,” said he. “It’s a plan of mine.” When three command battalions cut the road to the airport the police chief began to have doubts. Then a detachment of marine infantry took over the police headquarters and he knew something was afoot. Again he called the palace; this time Diem phoned his faithful military governor-general and was told by an aide that the governor was not

in. While they were talking, rebel forces were occupying the arsenal and the radio station.

At 1:45 the heavy, humid air of Saigon was shaken by shots. Supported by tanks, the insurgents started occupying all the city. Colonel Nguyen ngoc Khoi, commanding the presidential guard, prepared to hold off the attackers beginning to ring the palace. Again Diem tried to contact his military governor and, failing to reach him, concluded that he had been arrested, little knowing that the governor who the day after the brutal assault on the pagodas had saved Diem's face by swearing that the army was united to a man behind the president, had been flattered into joining the plot. Shortly after 3:00 p. m. an announcement came over the radio that fourteen generals and ten colonels had delivered an ultimatum to Diem and his brother to surrender.

Within the palace the procedure that had worked so well on November 11, 1960, was being repeated. Over the bunker radio Diem and Nhu began calling regional commanders to come to their rescue. The generals replied that they would obey the orders of the general staff. Then Nhu called for provincial governors to rush their civilian guards to his aid. Hour after hour the appeals from the bunker continued, always farther and farther afield, and Nhu waited in vain. He and his brother had tried their game once too often and were to learn, to their sorrow, the cost of the wave of revenge they had unleashed the last time troops had saved them.

General Duong van Minh—"Big Minh," they called him— showed himself by mid-afternoon as leader of the putsch, the same Minh who, as a colonel seven and a half years before had acquired his star as general of brigade by destroying the

Hoa Hao and the Binh Xuyen for Diem in the Battle of RungSat, thereby opening their vast areas to the Communists. Another coincidence was not overlooked as the war of religion between Diem and the Buddhists seemed likely to rip the country asunder: It was Diem's American advisors, the meddlers from Michigan State, "Iron Mike" O'Daniel and Colonel Edward Lansdale, the political officer with the poison-mimeograph, who first introduced the religious factor into Vietnamese politics with their playing of Diem and his Nung tribe mercenaries against the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao.

Sometime during the afternoon of October 31, Cabot Lodge is reported to have telephoned the palace and offered Diem safe conduct out of the country. “I refuse,” Diem is said to have replied. “But know that I appreciate your great thoughtfulness.”

As night fell the two brothers, trapped in the bunker beneath the Gia Long Palace, were still appealing for help. Again the insurgents called on them to surrender. Again they refused, and the order to charge was given. Ten M-24 tanks opened a breach in the wall.

Albert Pham ngoc Thao, Joe Alsop’s hero—the man whom Time magazine of April 12, 1961, glorified for getting Diem reelected—had known when to jump. One might imagine Thao as fighting for his own life and Diem’s as this struggle was going on. Not at all. As head of Nhu’s secret police, Thao knew when the game was up and saved his skin by changing sides. He spent the night broadcasting diatribes against his late master.

Madame Nhu, following the battle in Beverly Hills with her ears glued to a radio, said nothing against her husband’s righthand man, but stepped up her tirades against the Americans. It is true, the storming of the palace was an affair that the young hot-heads of USIS and CIA should have stayed out of. European papers told of American “advisors” entering Gia Long Palace with the first wave of troops: young Americans in civilian clothes, wearing baseball caps and talking incessantly into walkie-talkies as they moved from one unit to another among the attacking forces. Correspondents wrote of American “photographers” whom they had never seen before and who did not use their cameras, accompanying each advancing wave.

At 3:00 a. m. Vietnamese marines massed for a final assault some two hundred and forty feet from the palace. An hour later two T-28 planes made strafing passes and at 4:15 the attack was ordered. As each room was cleared a white sheet was

hung from the window so that artillery fire outside would cease.

The last message from the radio in the bunker was monitored about 4:00 a. m. All else had failed and Nhu, at the end of his rope, played his last card. He called on his Republican Youth and the Women’s militia, organized by his wife, to go into the streets and save them. There was no reply, nothing but silence. The last highly paid rats had left the ship.

The palace was empty when the search for the two brothers began. Later it was learned that they had escaped through a tunnel leading to the home of

a Chinese who had long served as a cover for Nhu and was in that spot for just such an occasion. To the end the brothers never lost their cunning: As Marvin Liebman, the friend of Diem's public relations huckster, had so truthfully put it, Diem's hatred of the Chinese was a pathological thing, so a Chinese home would be the last place where Diem's enemies would expect to find his tunnel. And it was through the house of Mai Tuyen, the Chinese, that they escaped in the early hours of November 1 to the church of St. Francis of Xavier in Cholon, the Chinese city —Le van Vien's old center of vice and pleasure, the city from whence Nhu had sent Le van Vien's son to his death seven years before.

For about an hour the two brothers remained in prayer. An armored car drew up outside. At 10:15 the Saigon radio announced that they had committed suicide while being transferred to army headquarters. Fantastic versions of their death began sweeping the town. A Vietnamese sergeant showed their stained jackets and said that Diem had been killed by a bullet in the back of the head but that Nhu had been stabbed in the back. Another story had it that Nhu flew into a rage and was shot when he lunged for a gun.

Georges Chaff ord (Indochine-Dix A ns de L'Independence) gives a version according to which Nhu let himself be taken because he was deprived of his opium. Street gossipers claimed that the brothers knew too much about the USIS and CIA boys who had worked with them, and that they were murdered to seal their tongues. Among the shattered telephones on Nhu's desk lay an open book, entitled, Shoot to Kill, which he had been studying before he went to sleep.

The full story will eventually come out. To date, however, it has never been established who actually killed Diem and Nhu. Much as it would please many Americans to read that embassy officials, CIA inepts, and USIS liberals who had bolstered this family since 1954 were also guilty of murdering

them, the author does not, in all honesty, believe that America's high-handed plotters ordered the murder.

Granted, had Diem and Nhu not been killed, a trial would have followed, and at the trial the real defendants in the witness box as the crimes of the Ngo dinhs against their people were brought to light would be

the Americans who imposed them—labor leaders dictating policy, the Michigan State University revolutionaries, Mike Mansfield, Joseph Buttinger, Angier Biddle Duke and the distinguished guests of John d! Rockefeller's May 11, 1957, luncheon. But no order to assassinate the Ngo dinhs was necessary. There was not a family in Saigon that had not discussed in whispers the fate of a

friend or a relative—and an anti-Communist one at that

who had disappeared into the dungeon in the botanical gardens or some other of Nhu's prisons.

The American public had never been told of these things, and what paper, after singing the praises of the Ngo dinhs for eight years, was likely to say, "We lied to you; here is the true story. So the sympathy of America's conservatives surged to the widow, but heaped anathema on the men who had given her power and enriched her and, when the game became embarrassing, dropped her. A French journalist drily observed, "Madame Ambition is now Madame Revenge."

It is often the case, and certainly it was with Ambassador Nolting, that those outside of a beleagured capital know more of what is going on than do those within. In Hue, brother Can, the ruthless grafter generally referred to as the gangster of the family, knew long in advance that the end was near. Can eased his iron rule several weeks before his brothers were killed. When General Do cao Tri, commander of the fourth military region, went to his villa to arrest him, and at the same tune save him from being massacred, Can had taken refuge m the American consulate, which, in view of Can's conduct in Hue, could hardly refuse to hand him over. For one day a short dispatch appeared in the American press, announcing the discovery of mass graves and underground dungeons in Can's stronghold. Then silence. Americans never heard of them agam.

Can was flown back to Saigon, tried and executed, but a deal had been concluded, it was said, between General Minh's followers and the Americans: The Vietnamese were accorded

.ns scalp, but charges against him were held down to a minimum. Just enough to convict him without embarrassing America. So little of what Can had done in his days of unndled power ever reached the American public. A great storm

of protest rose from shocked sentimentalists who, on the other side of the world and dependent on Time magazine for information, could not see why he was being executed.

Americans who a short time before had been outraged over the brutality of the raids on Buddhist temples and the horror of the suicides did a turnabout overnight and turned their ire on their own government for not perpetuating what had shocked them. Using the fate of Diem and Nhu and Can's execution as ammunition against the Kennedy left, however, entailed blanket acceptance of Madame Nhu's statement that the Buddhist monks were nothing but Communists in saffron robes so accept her statement they did. It was surface thinkHad America s good conservatives devoted to events in Saigon the searching study that a people anxious to avoid being called kooks and lunatics should apply to every move before leaping into it, they could have built up a much more damning case. For the crime lay in choosing this family in the first place, putting it in power, refusing to let the Vietnamese topple our protegees while change was yet possible and then permitting our team to wash their hands of responsibility when the coming explosion threatened to compromise them.

There is no doubt that Communist agitators were active among the monks and students, for the Vietcong were as wily as the Nhus. If the police state rule of Diem and Nhu and the stupidity or intent of the small group of Americans supportmg it created a climate ideal for Communist agitation they—-not the Communists—should be blamed when the Communists exploit it

All this was overlooked, however, by California's Young Republicans, who flocked to take up the beautiful harridan w“°m ® French writer who knew her once described as "one of God s lies." That her father had closed his door on her was brushed off. When she cried, 'The United States wanted to crush the leaders legally elected by the Vietnamese people," they stood entranced, as though she were Joan of Arc. Had they but known it, the truth would have served their campaign against Kennedy and his planners so much better

Leaving between $11,000 and $14,000 in debte behind her, and swearmg never to set foot in the country again, Madame Nhu, accompanied by her daughter Le Thuy, took off for Rome m a blaze of fury to join her brother-in-law, the archbishop. While her other daughter and two sons were being «ov™ to Rome to join her, those whom she and her husband had

dispossessed began streaming home from their places of exile. Colonel Nguyen chanh Thi, who led the November

1960 paratrooper revolt, returned from three years of indigence and boredom in Cambodia. Nguyen ton Hoan, the Dai Viet leader, and General Due, of the defiant proclamation, flew back from Paris. Huynh sanh Thong, the Dai Viet party member whom U. S. Information Agency had hounded out of one job after another, including a job with a supposedly independent newsreel company, because of the letter he wrote predicting what was to happen, left his job at Yale University and headed for home. Saigon, in a delirium of joy reminiscent of Paris on its delivery from the Germans, danced in the streets. Tran trung Dung, Nhu's nephew by marriage and husband of that same Madame Dung who in a Paris restaurant the year before had wondered why her family did not get out while they could, quietly buried Diem and Nhu in the cemetery of Phu-Nhuan on the evening of November 3. For Maame Nhu the big adventure was over. The bitterness of unimportance in a luxurious apartment on Avenue Charles Floquet in Paris' most fashionable arrondissement lay ahead. For Vietnam the "long war" period had definitely ended and the "short campaign" was under way.

"Big Minh" set up a revolutionary committee to rule the country pending new and honest elections. The American press sang his praises and, surface-wise, all looked bright for the moment. But what was to follow after the first days of exultation should have been expected. "The team," who had been responsible for the shambles, were still anonymous because of a servile press, and there was no reason why the debacle in Saigon should drive them to shelter. Already they were at work to thwart the Vietnamese who had earned a chance at power and to ease into office one government after another of nonentities, from whom Ho chi Minh would eventually seize control. Plans for the buildup of Albert Pham ngoc Thao as eventual heir to the Ngo dinh's were already discernible, despite the fact that Thao was responsible for much of the country's hatred of that family.

Still repeating the mistake they had made with Diem, the team in Washington rushed to Saigon a man named Nguyen xuan Oanh, whom some unstated agency or private group (CIA, or Angier Biddle Duke's International Rescue Committeee?) had wafted to America after World War II, when America was glamorizing Ho chi Minh. Oanh had been out of his

country for fifteen years, studying at Harvard, teaching economics at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and even acquiring, so it was said, American nationality. The UN employed him for a while. It was evident that he never warned

the entrenched clique leading America downhill that their Diem experiment was going to be disastrous, since he never earned their enmity.

Unknown though he was in Vietnam, and certain to be despised for having remained comfortably in America while the going was rough, the high-handed little group in Washington that had been running Vietnam as they pleased picked up Nguyen xuan Oanh (nicknamed Jack Owens) and sent him home. It may have been the same group that brought him to America in the first place; a web of unfathomable intrigue surrounds almost every phase of the meddling in South Vietnam.

When joy at being liberated subsided, the honeymoon was over, and the public turned on Minh for retaining Diem's creatures. "Premier" Tho was the first to be sacrificed, since he had never had support from anyone but Diem. Thereupon Nguyen xuan Oanh was dubbed premier by the American team, with no more formalities or mandate than when Diem had made Tho vice-president. As a sop to the Dai Viet party, which had been persecuted by both Diem and his American backers all those years, Nguyen ton Hoan was given the rank, mainly honorific, of vice-premier. When Hoan saw that his hands were tied, he resigned.

Completely unobserved by the general public as all this manipulation was going on was Albert Pham ngoc Thao, who had successfully made the switch from intelligence chief for the Communists to commander of Nhu's secret police and, when Nhu fell, to a top spot among Diem's and Nhu's assassins. Thao was, potentially, the most dangerous man in the country. Not only was his record of Communist atrocities shocking and his capacity for treachery boundless, but the force at his disposal was an underground one. Since, no doubt at Thao's orders, Nhu's seventy-thousand-member network of killers and informers had ignored Nhu's appeal to go into the streets, they were neither broken up nor exposed, and Thao was still their leader. Both he and they were bound together more firmly than ever, if they were to save their own necks. But of all this Time and the American press said nothing, and Washington was silent. _

Out in the field, units of the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai sects, whom Diem and his American advisors had been fighting since mid-1955 as Communists, came in to make their peace, and officials for the first time admitted that they had been anticommunist all along. For a day or so stories of Cai Dai and Hoa Hao cooperation against the Reds appeared. Then silence.

"Big Minh," the man whom the sects were expected to accept as their new chief, was the same Minh who, with American "advisors" directing his artillery fire, had broken them in 1955. And there were the followers of Le van Vien, who had been communism's ruthless enemies. "Big Minh" and the Americans would not let Le van Vien come back at all.

If Vice President Tho was unacceptable as a civilian chief of state, who would head the new Vietnam? Hanoi, Saigon, Washington and Paris simultaneously posed this question. Here we have one of the most significant contradictions of the Vietnam fiasco; at least it is a contradiction if we are to assume that the aim of Americans who made South Vietnam their private affair was anything other than a Ho chi Minh victory.

Hanoi assumed that America would get behind the one Vietnamese with a party and a known determination to win the war; accordingly Hanoi launched a campaign against Nguyen ton Hoan. That America should back anyone else seemed inconceivable to Ho chi Minh's central committee. A 103-page booklet entitled Saigon at the Hour of Coups d*Etat was rushed out by Ho's Foreign Language Editions press to destroy Hoan by labelling him the warmongering puppet of the Americans. In Washington, however, two recognized conservatives came out with a column of "inside information" on November 9, 1963, just eight days after the Diem and Nhu assassination, which could only have been slipped to them by someone determined to block Hoan. No better example exists of the way in which the international left profits by the lack of communication among the world's disunited conservatives to play them against each other, than the manner in which Allen and Scott were led into using a line that would be effective in America to knife the man whom Humanite, the French Communist daily, had torpedoed as pro-American and a warmonger (ff«manite, February 27, 1962).

Wrote Allen and Scott, “Remember the name of Nguyen ton Hoan! He is the man to keep an eye on in the seething South Vietnamese cauldron.” (Hoan had just resigned as vicepremier and seemed likely to move in as president or premier in a matter of weeks.)

They continued, “Hoan is head of the Democratic League of Vietnam, with headquarters in New Haven.” Actually, Hoan headed the Dai Viet (Great Land or Great Viet) party. Neither it nor Dr. Hoan were headquartered in New Haven. Hoan’s friend and party member Mr. Huynh sanh Thong had been working at Yale University, it will be recalled, since his discharge from a job with the State Department in February

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1956 for writing letters to the Christian Science Monitor and the Washington Post, predicting what has since happened in his country, and his discharge from News of the Day by order of the U. S. Information Agency.

The next untruth: “A leftist-leaning politician, Hoan was sent into exile by the late President Diem for ‘anti-American’ activities. He is credited with favoring the establishment of a so-called coalition government to seek ‘unity’ with communistruled North Vietnam.” The exact opposite was true. Of Hoan’s violent anti-communism and his coup d’etat attempt against Ho chi Minh in 1946, Allen and Scott knew nothing. As regards the “sent into exile” statement, it will be recalled that U. S. Ambassador Donald Heath gave Hoan his visa and sent him to Washington to tell his story, after which Hoan did not dare go home.

The “coalition government” and “unity with communistruled North Vietnam” were likewise part of the hatchet job. The advocate of such a solution was Hoan’s mortal enemy, former Premier Tran van Huu, currently working with the Vietnamese Communist, Nguyen manh Ha, son-in-law of a French Communist deputy named Maranne.

“Several months ago the State Department gave Hoan a visa to come to the U. S. from Paris,” Allen and Scott continued. “He was there in the early days of the Buddhist protests. Two Saigon leaders of that stormy anti-Diem movement are close associates of Hoan. They are Tam Chau and Tri Quang.” True, after refusing Hoan entry into America since 1956, the State Department issued him a visa when they decided to get out from under Diem. Like all former cabinet members and opposition leaders, Hoan had maintained contact with the Buddhists who were also dissatisfied with “America’s man”, though Hoan himself is a Catholic, a fact which the same

American agents using Allen and Scott to torpedo Hoan in Washington were holding up to Buddhists in Saigon as an argument against him.

The last Allen and Scott paragraph was meant to polish off the victim once and for all. “After leaving Hanoi University in 1940, Hoan was tied up with French Intelligence.” The truth is, Hoan left Hanoi University in 1945, delayed by the war. In 1939 he founded the first section of the Dai Viet party within the university. In 1943 Communist killers made two attempts to assassinate him because of his “disintoxication” project to un-brainwash Communist students.

That same year, probably on a Communist tip-off, since they often used that way of getting an enemy, Hoan was ar

rested by the Japanese. Released, he was hunted by the Japs again in 1944 and went underground. In 1945 he was tracked by the French because his Dai Viet party, claiming independence, was considered subversive.

Three weeks after Allen and Scott’s gratuitous hatchet job on the one man Hanoi wanted destroyed it was the turn of the Washington World. On December 2, 1963, the World told its readers, “Although ‘officially’ they are happy with the new government in South Vietnam, veteran U. S. diplomats are chary over the political vacuum created by the overthrow of the Diem regime. One reason: Nguyen ton Hoan, a leftleaning politician who had been living in exile in New Haven, Connecticut, as head of the Democratic League of Viet Nam may well be sucked into the leadership vacuum. If so, there could be much agitation to ‘unify’ South Viet Nam withNorth Viet Nam.”

Any anti-Communist authority on Vietnam, piecing these divers moves together, can arrive at only two assumptions: Americans in Washington and Saigon who had left no stone unturned to ruin Hoan and destroy his party during the years of all-out support for Diem were determined that the man they had come to regard as a personal enemy was not going to get in. Or, they were out to deliver the country to Ho chi Minh by seeing that no one capable of fighting Ho chi Minh should rise to power.

In January 30, 1964, “Big Minh” was overthrown and a Buddhist general, Nguyen Khanh, took over. Minh’s revolutionary committee was replaced by Khanh’s revolutionary council, and overnight America took up the praises of Khanh. Again, serious students of the situation had misgivings. Khanh brother of a Communist official named Nguyen Long,

had become Diem's fair-haired boy during the November 11, 1960 coup d'etat attempt by making his way into the palace, taking command of the presidential guard and holding out until Tran thien Khiem could betray his comrades (and become a brigadier-general) by bringing up his tanks.

Thereafter Khanh and Khiem could do anything. Khanh sat on the general staff but as Diem's favorite he took orders from Diem alone, ignored the chain of command and went his own freewheeling way. When he replaced Minh it may have pleased the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, but in the overall picture there was no improvement. The paratroopers over whom Khanh and Khiem walked to advancement in November 1960 hated the new team as fiercely as the sects hated the old one. What a

basket of eels was this nation, about which every hoodwinked and lied-to American thought he knew everything!

Chaos reigned. Buddhists, drunk with the headiness of power after nine years on the receiving end, rapidly lost all the sympathy their just grievances and suicides had brought them. The climate for Communist agitation was perfect. On February 2 rioting students, as intoxicated with their own importance as the Buddhists, made trouble till Khanh took "Big Minh" back into his government. The truth of the law of physics that every swing of the pendulum is followed by an equal and opposite reaction was never better illustrated. But, watching this anarchy from across the ocean and applying an explanation to fit their wishes, Americans by the thousands accepted the fallacious premise that "unti Diem and Nhu were killed our side was winning." Great lawyers who would never have taken a case without thoroughly studying the background flocked to the defense of Madame Nhu. Catholics and Catholic journals took up the cause of the Ngo dinhs because they were Catholic, and Protestant conservatives because, in the last two minutes of the game, and then only, the most arrogant group of planners that ever misdirected a nation had decided to take their distance from the Ngo dinhs.

On March 23, 1964, and for that day only, an AP report a little over two inches long appeared in an inside page of the New York News. Most papers failed to print it at all. Assets illegally acquired by Diem and the Nhus had gone on display in Saigon the previous day. Included were photographs of the elegant bathroom in Madame Nhu's sumptuous home in Dalat. The loot exhibited was appraised at some $20 million, or over $2,300,000 for each year that Diem and Nhu had held power. This, of course, represented only

such assets as had not been shipped out of the country by the family that had nothing in June 1954, when Bao Dai gave Diem a check for a million piastres—to hire a claque. The assets of shipping companies, construction enterprises, real estate and fishing firms, sugar, rice and cinnamon houses, etc., concealed through Nhu's arrangements with business men fronting for him, had already been confiscated, three months before.

Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea in this tracking down of accomplices was poor Mai Tuyen, the Chinese whose house sheltered the escape end of Diem's tunnel. Despite everything the Ngo dinhs had done to his people, Mai Tuyen, to stay in business, had had to put up with anything Nhu and Diem demanded, even to the Vietnamization of his name. Had he denounced them the morning of their escape, he could have

saved his property, but who could be sure, even then, that "the family" would not come out on top? In the end Mai Tuyen's belongings were confiscated along with the property he covered for "Honest Diem" and his brother.

Pandemonium was the best word for Saigon as 1964 unfolded. On August 17 Khanh again drove out Minh and had a junta name him chief of state. Out in the streets again came rioting Buddhists and Vietnam's new beatnik student class. On August 25 Khanh tore up the charter voted by his junta and stepped down from the presidency, to prevent further disorder. There was a pause. For a moment it appeared that the day Nguyen ton Hoan and the Dai Viet had been awaiting for twenty-five years was at hand. Then something happened. That America had a hand in it would seem evident from the viciousness of the campaign against Hoan's assuming the presidency. Hoan was summarily driven out of the country to Hong Kong, and on September 3 General Khanh returned to what might, by a stretch of the term, be called power.

Actually it was anarchy. The first intimation of what was afoot came in a dispatch out of Saigon by Warren Rogers, Washington bureau chief of Hearst Headline Service, on September 21, 1964. Who Washington—and Hanoi—were out to destroy we already know. Hearst's Washington bureau chief furnished the first clue as to who was on the upgrade. It was Albert Pham ngoc Thao.

Of all the far-out sorties of newsmen into the outer space beyond common sense, no report given the American public since the Vietnam hoax began was ever so insulting to the public's intelligence or less able to stand up under analysis than Warren Rogers's September 21 effort to make a fine fellow out of a Communist breaker of men. It will be remembered that when Thao headed Ho chi Minh's intelligence the toughest legionnaires, with reason, regarded death as preferable to capture. In September Major General Duong van Due had led his troops on Saigon in an abortive coup d'etat. He made three demands on the government, the first of which was the elimination of Albert Pham ngoc Thao, whose ruthlessness for the Communists, Due had personally experienced as a prisoner. Warren Rogers pooh-poohed it as the petty gripe of a coward against a fine officer who did his duty. No sentimental nonsense about the underdog was permitted to interfere with the new line. Those watching the writhing of the Vietnam basket of eels and the sinuous turnings of American policy with any knowledge of the actors involved murmured "This is it," and waited for the next development.

On October 1 it came. Colonel Albert Pham ngoc Thao was appointed press attache to the Vietnamese embassy in Washington. With him, as ambassador, went Lieutenant General Tran thien Khiem, the godson of Diem, who had been Senator Mike Mansfield's "godson" when the going was good.

By coincidence or logical train of events, depending on the realism of the viewer, shortly after Nhu's former secret police chief and Diem godson reached Washington in their new capacities all the bills Madame Nhu left behind her in America, somewhere between $11,000 and $14,000, were quietly paid.

There was another coincidence as the disastrous summer of 1964 drew to a close and the September maneuverings in Saigon to get Khiem and Thao appointed to Washington as ambassador and press attache, respectively, unfolded. At that very moment senators in far-off Washington were obediently approving the Johnson-Rusk appointment of Randolph Kidder as United States ambassador to Cambodia.

Now it will be recalled that Diem's invasion of Cambodia in June 1958 was responsible for Cambodia's swing toward Peking, and Randolph Kidder, regarded in Southeast Asia as the foremost of Madame Nhu

favorites, was held responsible for our continuing support of Diem. So naming Kidder ambassador to Cambodia was nothing more nor less than a last push to shove vital Cambodia the rest of the way into Peking's arms, if that were necessary. How to estrange allies and win friends—for our deadliest enemy—seems our greatest talent.

Not an American paper expressed anything but surprise when Cambodia refused to permit Randolph Kidder to enter the country.

On December 6, Thao's wife, Pham thi Nhiem, the longtime Communist militant and sister of the Communist professor, Pham Thieu, joined her husband with her four children. The capital where the fanatic Red found herself, still claimed to be the torch-bearer for liberty in Southeast Asia and continued to sacrifice several young Americans a day to convince America's patriotic citizens it was true. But a change was in the air. Senator Mansfield, the stubborn Montanan most responsible for South Vietnam's defeat by despair, the member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations who would not consider anyone but his man when a change could have been made, overnight began talking about "negotiations," a euphemism for surrender.

When confronted by the anarchy he, more than any other senator, had made inevitable, by encouraging destruction of

®^erv "" ?nd group capable of assuring stability. Senator Mansfield piously observed, "The Vietnamese should realize that it is their country and their war." Had the good senator only realized it ten years sooner, all might have been so difierenti

ioI?e*wW«York. Times told its readers on November 22, 1964, that a pair of folk singers who have been touring American college campuses by conventional transportation wifi soon be touring the back villages of Vietnam by helicopter." Reporter Robert Shelton continued to tell how the State Department was sending Bill Crofut and Steve Addiss abroad, on their second such government-backed junket... as a sort of two-man musical peace corps." Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia Malaysia, Thailand and Kenya were to be their destinations. On a previous trip they sang for Burmese students in a communist school and were made honorary tribesmen in Kenya." On the subject of opposition to communism, "All we know is what we read in the New York Times," said Mr. Crofut. "We don t want to get.involved in

any power struggle. We are out to give Asians a different picture of Americans." So American defense of liberty had become a "power struggle."

When two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers" was e way Messrs. Crofut and Addiss summed up their line Neutralism, not encouragement that Vietnamese warn and assist American officers behind the barbed wire of bases about to be attacked, was the policy Addiss and Crofut were being fo ldl VlCtnam and helicoptered from village to villagf

The best picture to be found of America's disastrous fourstage tragedy in South Vietnam is provided by spreading four HoUchi°M^lr^* magazine out on a table: In 1946 came the

^1Dh ph"e'uWUh Har0ld R'Isaacs smging Ho's praises as the George Washington of Southeast Asia"—the man who S2J2? m his frail body only by his purity of aim (!) and singleness of purpose. Obscenities were heaped on French officers who opposed him.

fJnt.Ja°ua? 195f Harper's accorded Senator Mansfield space

the Ho r dmg °f N£? dmh Diem- Times had changed, and Ho lme was out. Then came Harper's of September 1962:

StunW M-n? dlsclaim. responsibility for Diem, so Professor memo7-^met ,was Prided with a press to tell Harper's short

Ord^a[aetthr!HerSHa fUt T'™ " Vietaa"~An American's uraeal at the Hands of our Friends."

R Harper's ot December 1964, eighteen years after Harold . Isaacs passionate plea for Ho, Harper's patient editors com

pleted the circle and published a call by Joseph Kraft (expropagandist for the Algerian FLN) to get out of Vietnam and let North and South negotiate between themselves. If one read the signs correctly, and they were many, America's postwar protege, Ho chi Minh, was about to win out in the end. There was no resolute, last-hour girding for American victory.

Desperate American "advisors," watching protected guerrillas and unhindered raiders wipe out experienced officers and young West Pointers with impunity, cried for unity—anything that would provide a semblance of a rallying point. David Schoenbrun, who on September 30, 1956 (in Colliers), trumpeted for Diem to "not only remove Bao Dai, but do it in such a way that he no longer has any usefulness as a symbol of Vietnamese

unity," had by 1964 washed his hands of the whole affair and was busy burrowing elsewhere.

"How did we ever get involved in South Vietnam?" a public capable only of apathy or indignation oegan to cry. "Was it for this that we people were bled white, our gold reserves squandered and our dollar brought to the brink of collapse?" The answer, bluntly is: Yes. A senseless, stupid crusade against colonialism, agreed upon by Roosevelt and Stalin at Teheran, led us up to our waists in the quagmire of Indochina. Determination to replace the allies we were ousting drew us in the rest of the way.

A one-hour, carrier-based airstrike could nave destroyed Ho chi Minh's decimated army in March 1954, saved the beleaguered garrison at Dien Bien Phu and changed the course of history. But there was a virus in the bloodstream of America that desired a Vietminh triumph. The story of Indochina is the story of the decline of the West. Only an informed public, such as America did not have on November 3, 1964, will bring the victory at the polls which alone will eradicate the virus and prevent many more mdochinas to come. All of the force of America's massed left, from the White House down, are regimented to silence those who would tell America the truth.

APPENDIX

IMPORTANT DATES

1925: Bao Dai, twelve years old, a student in France, becomes emperor of Vietnam upon the death of his father. 1929: The Communist party of Indochina is founded.

1939: World War II begins. The Dai Viet party is founded by Nguyen ton Hoan.

1940: France falls to Germany. French Indochina, loyal to the Vichy government in France, comes under Japanese domination.

1945: March: Japan ends French rule in Vietnam. Bao Dai proclaims the independence of Vietnam.

August: Hiroshima. V-J day. Communist Ho chi Minh and his Vietminh effectively take over Vietnam. Ho chi Minh forces Bao Dai to abdicate.

September: France begins to reestablish her rule in Vietnam.

1946: An eight-year war between France and the Communist Vietminh begins. Bao Dai escapes from Ho chi Minh; flies to Nanking.

1948: Bai Vien, the pirate, brings his band to the side of France against the Communists.

1949: Bao Dai returns as chief of state of Vietnam.

1950: Communist China begins large-scale military aid to the Vietminh. Bai Vien acquires the “Grande Monde,” the great gambling monopoly; builds up a private force that is the terror of the Reds. The United States increases aid to the French.

1952: June: Nguyen van Tam (father of Nguyen van Hinh) replaces Tran van Huu as premier.

1953: May: Henri Navarre becomes French military commander in Vietnam.

November: The French occupy Dien Bien Phu.

1954: Bai Vien becomes “General Le van Vien” and head of the Saigon police.

April 26: In Geneva, the conference on Indochina opens.

May 7: Dien Bien Phu falls to the Communists.

June 15: Ngo dinh Diem takes office as premier of South Vietnam.

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July 21: The Geneva agreement is signed giving North Vietnam to the Communists.

July: Refugees begin to stream from North to South Vietnam.

September: Nguyen van Hinh, chief of staff of the army, heads a movement to remove Diem from power. The attempt fails and Hinh is forced to leave the country.

October 15: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee receives a Vietnam report from Senator Mike Mansfield. Based on a trip Senator Mansfield made to Vietnam, the report is strongly pro-Diem.

1955: March: The United Nationalist Front made up of the Binh Xuyen, the Cao Dai sect, the Hoa Hao sect, and others, forms a coalition against the Diem regime. October 23: The official results of a national referendum to decide whether the country should remain an empire or become a republic give Ngo dinh Diem 5,721,735 votes, Bao Dai 63,017.

1956: March: A national assembly is elected in South Vietnam.

1957: February 22: A student attempts to assassinate Diem at Ban Me Thout.

I960: October: Red forces erupt on the high plateau and defeat the regular army.

November 11: Paratroopers revolt against the government of President Diem.

1962: March: Two planes of the Vietnamese airforce strafe Diem's palace.

1963: January 2: Communist forces defeat the Vietnamese army at Ap Bac.

May 8: Armored cars open fire on Buddhists in Hue. A series of crises starts.

August: Henry Cabot Lodge becomes United States ambassador to South Vietnam.

October: The United States cuts sharply its aid to South Vietnam.

November 1: The final military revolt against the Diem regime begins. Ngo dinh Diem and his brother Ngo dinh Nhu are forced to flee the palace.

November 2: In the early morning the palace falls to rebel forces. Later, Nhu and Diem are arrested and then assassinated while being transported to army headquarters in Saigon.

IMPORTANT VIETNAMESE NAMES

Bao Dai: Hereditary emperor of Vietnam, though after his abdication in 1945 and restoration in 1949 he was known as "chief of state."

Buu Loc: Cousin of Bao Dai and premier of the last FrenchVietnam government. Buu Loc was premier at the time of the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

Ngo dinh Diem: Son of Ngo dinh Kha, a mandarin (court official) at the court of the Emperor Khai Dinh, Bao Dai's father. In June 1954 Diem, at America's insistence, was named premier by Emperor Bao Dai. Diem was then fifty-four years old. The power setup of Ngo dinhs was primarily a family affair.

Ngo dinh Thuc: Diem's brother, three years older than Diem, became bishop of Vinh Long. Thuc controlled the churches in South Vietnam.

Ngo dinh Nhu: Nhu was forty-three when Diem rose to power. He had been a labor leader. To him went the police. He was known as "advisor to the president."

Ngo dinh Can: Can was forty-one. To him went the traffic in rice, and the northern part of Vietnam as his fief.

Ngo dinh Luyen: Luyen was thirty-nine. To him went diplomacy. He became ambassador to London, Tunis, Brussels and Bonn, and handled all funds for these embassies.

Madame Ngo dinh Nhu: Nhu's beautiful and avaricious wife. She became the "first lady" of Vietnam and controlled business deals and secret funds, with a women's paramilitary organization of her own.

Tran van Chuong: Madame Nhu's father, a lawyer in private life, became ambassador to Washington, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil, with control of embassy funds for those countries.

Tran van Do: Brother of Tran van Chuong. He became the first minister of foreign affairs of the Diem regime.

Madame Tran van Chuong: Madame Nhu's mother, formerly a councilor of the French Union. In the early days of the Diem regime Madame Chuong placed her favorites in positions of power. When edged out by her daughter she became Vietnam's observer in the UN. Licensing of commercial enterprises had been her domain.

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Madame Ca-L&: Sister of Ngo dinh Diem. She headed the Company of Cereal Traders, controllers of the rice traffic in central Vietnam.

Tran van Khiem: Brother of Madame Nhu. He was press secretary at time of the Binh Xuyen crisis; later became head of police.

Tran trung Dung: Son-in-law of Madame Ca-Le. He became secretary of state for defense.

Nguyen van Thoai: Brother-in-law of Madame Ca-Le. From 1954 to May 1955 he was minister of planning and reconstruction. He was followed by Hoang Hung, a former Vietminh.

Huynh van Lang: Godson of Monsignor Thuc. He controlled the foreign exchange office.

Nguyen van Don: Boyhood friend of Nhu. He was made secretary of state for national education.

Ton that Thrach: A Diem godson. He became director-general of customs.

Tran huu Phuong: He sheltered Diem in Paris in 1953 and 1954. Consequently he became secretary of state for finances and later head of the national bank of Vietnam.

Tran chanh Thanh: An old-time Vietminh "administrator of justice" for Ho chi Minh. He became secretary of state for information under Diem,

while his wife was a business partner of Madame Nhu's in several projects. In May 1962 Thanh became ambassador to Tunisia.

Nguyen van Hinh: Son of Nguyen van Tam. As chief of staff of the army of South Vietnam, Hinh, a hero of the French airforce in World War II, led the first challenge to the Ngo dinhs in September 1954. At date of this writing he is chief of staff of the French airforce.

Nguyen van Tam: A former premier of Vietnam and father of General Nguyen van Hinh, chief of staff of the army of free and independent Vietnam.

Bai Vien: The early name of General Le van Vien, leader of the private army of the Binh Xuyen.

Le van Vien: The former pirate who led the coalition of political parties, religious sects and his own private army against the Ngo dinhs in April 1955. See Bai Vien.

Pham cong Tac: Pope of the Cao Dai sect.

Albert Pham ngoc Thao: Head of Ho chi Minh's intelligence service during the war against the French. Brother of Ho chi Minh official, Gaston, son of Pham ngoc Thuan, head of Vietminh League, in Paris. Under the Diem regime Thao became head of the credit office of the American aid

section of the national bank and later intelligence chief for Ngo dinh Nhu in the Nhu party, the Can Lao Nhan VI (Worker's Humanist Revolutionary party). On October 31, 1963, Thao deserted Nhu and Diem, worked for the revolting generals. Became information chief, first under General Minh, then under General Nguyen Khanh. He was assigned to the Vietnamese embassy in Washington in late September 1964. He disappeared from Washington on December 26. On February 19, 1965, Thao surfaced in Saigon in a coup d'etat attempt which held Saigon for one day. His arrest was ordered but Thao, protected by powerful but unnamed forces, went underground. He was still unapprehended at date of this writing.

Bacut: Commander of the military forces of the Hoa Hao sect. Le Monde (Paris diplomatic daily) of April 12, 1956, reported execution of twelve Vietminh agents at Chauduc, by Bacut. Communists launched a campaign in retaliation. The Diem government, using Ambassador to Japan

Nguyen ngoc Tho as an intermediary, lured Bacut into a trap under a truce agreement and executed him. Bacut was also known as Le quang Vinh.

Nguyen ngoc Tho: Was appointed vice-president of South Vietminh by Diem for his services in leading the Hoa Hao leader Bacut into a trap under promise of a truce in the summer of 1956. In the last days of the Diem regime he quit the Diem government in protest over Diem treatment of Buddhists.

Ho chi Minh: Last of the old time Communist revolutionaries and president of the People's Republic of North Vietnam. As far back as 1918 Ho chi Minh wrote an incendiary article on the plight of the American Negro in Harlem, in which Ho clearly foresaw the possibility of using the American Negro as a tool for revolution.

Vo nguyen Giap: Commander-in-chief of "the people's army" of North Vietnam. He is author of the celebrated book on guerrilla warfare, People's War, People's Army.

Pham van Dong: Premier of the Ho chi Minh government of North Vietnam and number-two man in the Ho chi MinhGeneral Giap-Premier Pham van Dong triumvirate which rules the country.

Nguyen ton Hoan: Catholic, veteran leader ot the Dai Viet party, the largest and best established nationalist, antiCommunist party in South Vietnam. After Diem's fall Hoan was attacked by Hanoi as the man America would logically choose to replace Diem and he was attacked by

Americans (the Washington World of Dec. 2, 1963; the Allen & Scott column of Nov. 9, 1963, and Warren Rogers' Hearst Headline Service report on September 21, 1964) for reasons that are not clear. None of the charges against him would stand up under scrutiny and Ho an was the one nationalist leader that Hanoi feared. After a brief period as vice-premier under General Nguyen Khanh, Hoan was exiled by Khanh on September 3, 1964. His exile created a total leadership vacuum and was another step toward chaos in Saigon.

Pham huy Quat: A doctor by profession, minister of national defense under Nguyen van Tam in 1952 and personable as a man but without sufficient base to become a national leader. In 1946 Quat was one of the wealthy, northern mandarins to join the Dai Viet party as protection against the Vietminh. In 1949 when France regained power in Indochina, Quat left the Dai Viet nationalists and opted to work with the French, thereby

acquiring a “puppet” label. Through 1951, 1952, and 1953, the Dai Viet party, led by Nguyen ton Hoan, was outlawed for expelling Quat and other members who favored collaboration with the French rather than a campaign for independence. After Hoan’s exile in September 1964, American agents in Saigon backed Quat in his attempt to seize leadership of the entire Dai Viet party. Quat was marked as America’s choice for the premiership but both his defection from the leaders that saved him in 1946 and the fact that, like Diem, he is a northerner, work against him.

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Notes on the Bibliography

The article by Mr. Rose, listed above, is a review of six books on Vietnam: Vietnam Diary, by Richard Tregaskis; The

Two Vietnams, by Bernard Fall; Communism in North Vietnam, by Patrick J. Honey; The Furtive War: The United States in Vietnam and Laos, by Wilfred G. Burchett; Southeast Asia: Problems of United States Policy, by William Henderson; and Southeast Asia in U.S. Policy, by Russell H. Fifield. Burchett is an Australian Communist who has spent some time living with the Vietminh in North Vietnam.

The New York Times, February 12, 1965, gave a report on another Burchett book that is nothing more nor less than antiAmerican propaganda. The report is as follows: “Vietcong, by a Friend—A book about the Vietcong forces that operate in South Vietnam, written by Wilfred G. Burchett, the Moscow correspondent of a number of communist

newspapers, will be published at the end of the month by International Publishers Associates of New York. It is ‘Vietnam: Dark Tunnel to Disaster —The Story from the Inside.’ The publishers explain that Mr. Burchett’s book is ‘an account of what he saw and learned during six months with the Liberation forces in South Vietnam.’ An article by Mr. Burchett telling of his experiences with the Vietcong appeared in a Soviet military weekly in December, 1963.”

The article by Mr. Sachs, listed above, is quite simply a whitewash of the Communist Vietminh. At the date of this writing Mr. Sachs is a professor at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hilaire du Berrier was the first white child born in the little town his pioneer parents founded on the banks of a stream called Louse Creek in North Dakota. He studied in Minnesota, went to Layton School of Art in Milwaukee for a semester, then to Northwestern University School of Journalism in Chicago for a term. At the age of twenty he was barnstorming with a flying circus. In 1931 he went to Paris to spend, he thought, three months with his uncle, a former South Dakota congressman then appointed commissioner to the United States participation in the French Colonial Exposition. This was the beginning of a life of adventure that was to lead him into the trouble spots of the world and was to prevent his return to America until sixteen years later.

When it became obvious that Mussolini intended to invade Ethiopia, du Berrier bought a ticket to Addis Ababa to offer his services to Emperor Haile Selassie. The long awaited material never arrived, and du Berrier ended up as a war correspondent for Central News Agency of London. It was as a prisoner of the Italians that he entered Addis Ababa on May 5, 1936, in the second automobile in the Italian advance guard’s column.

French friends got him out of Addis Ababa and down to the coastal port of Jibouti on a French train. There du Berrier worked for a month with the disheartened Ethiopian consul, Lij And argue Messai, who later became the son-in-law of Haile Selassie and viceroy of Erytria.

When the civil war began in Spain, du Berrier was in Rumania trying unsuccessfully to sell airplanes for Koolhoven Aircraft of Rotterdam. Viewing the Franco revolt as a step toward restoration of the monarchy in Spain, du Berrier dropped everything and boarded a train for Cannes. There he asked the advice of Colonel Clifford Harmon, a pro-Franco American,

donor of the Harmon Trophy and founder of the International League of Aviators.

Armed with a letter from Harmon to General Orgaz, Franco's chief of staff in Tetuan, du Berriei set off for his rendezvous in Tangiers with Franco agent Don Cezar Alba. But he met only frustration. Italians were powerful in Franco's

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air force, and du Berrier was on their blacklist for having helped Haile Selassie in Ethiopia.

Back to Paris he went to knock on the door of Franco's unofficial ambassador, the Marquis Quiniones de Leon, who, as it turned out, could do nothing for him. He then went to England and with a friend from Ethiopia, RAF pilot Hugh Olaf de Wet (later sentenced to death by the Germans), pestered Franco's London representative, the Marquis de Portago, with requests that they be sent to Franco's front. De Portago could do nothing for them either.

Determined to see the Spanish civil war from the inside, de Wet went to the Spanish .Loyalist embassy in London and signed himself up as a pursuit pilot at $1,000 per month and expenses, $15,000 for each plane he shot down, and $10,000 payable to anyone he wished in the event he was killed. "And," said the Spanish official, "we'll give you twenty pounds sterling [$100] for each recruit you can bring us."

Not till a year later did du Berrier learn that his pal had "sold" him to the Loyalists for the equivalent of a hundred dollars.

On November 2, 1936, the two arrived in Madrid—where Franco's troops were sitting in the suburbs. In the dead of the night with three other pilots, de Wet and du Berrier were driven in a commandeered car through the closing pincers of Franco's advance.

Their first stop was Albacete, but the planes they were to fly had been destroyed on the ground; so the tired carload of pilots pushed on to the naval airbase at San Javier near the army airforce base of Los Alcazares. After a check out at Los Alcazares, du Berrier was assigned to a pursuit group in Alicante and de Wet was sent to Barcelona.

When the one-month contract expired, the problem of getting out presented itself. After a week of stalling over safe conduct papers and travel permits, du Berrier was sent to the new air ministry in Valencia.

Meanwhile, Communist reports from Paris had informed the Loyalist government that du Berrier was an anti-Communist. Accordingly, one of the Valencia groups that was making arrests on its own and executing prisoners without notifying the central government arrested du Berrier at 8:30 a.m. on November 10, 1936, and took him to an interrogation center. Not until Senor Pliny, the interpreter from the air ministry, arrived that afternoon at 4:45 with the papers that saved him, did du Berrier learn that those sharing the bench with him

during that day had been taken out and shot when their names were called.

Colonel Alberto Bayo (who later trained Castro's guerrillas) was responsible for saving du Berrier's life. The reason: Eleanor Roosevelt and other American liberals were doing a great deal for Loyalist Spain and Bayo was determined not to risk alienating them by having an American executed. Bayo sheltered him in the air ministry that night and put him, under military guard, on a train bound for France the following morning.

In Paris du Berrier went at once to military attaches Colonel Fuller and Major Waite in the American embassy and gave them an account of the situation in Spain—the Americans serving there under assumed names and the Russian material being used. Next, aided by Mr. Ralph Heintzen of United Press, du Berrier wrote a series of articles on Moscow's direction of the Spanish civil war. These articles were published in part by the Hearst press in America and were syndicated abroad by the French agency Opera-Mundi.

It was at the suggestion of Colonel Charles Sweeney .that du Berrier sailed for the Orient in mid-April 1937. "There is going to be a show out there," said Sweeney. "You go and see if you can get all of us in." By a "show," Sweeney meant a war. And by "all of us," he meant the little group of adventurous flyers who sat with him in Paris bars and talked of past wars around the world.

On the boat with du Berrier was Admiral le Bigot and his staff, who were on their way to assume command of the French Far East fleet. Rear-Admiral Petit was with them, as were replacements for the military command in Indochina, the French concession in Shanghai, and French forces in points north.

By the time they tied up in Saigon three weeks later, du Berrier had established such ties of friendship so that thereafter the fate of any French officer in Indochina was a matter of personal concern to him.

During his short stay in Saigon—a visit that changed the course of his life—he became close friends with Lieutenant de Vaisseau Ponchardier, the aviator aboard the flagship La Motte-Picquet. Ponchardier was later to live in the swamps of Indochina in a deadly underground war against first the Japanese and later the Vietminh.

Lieutenant de Vaisseau de Riencourt, pilot of the hydroplane hoisted on the stern of the cruiser Le Primaguet was another friend. De Riencourt's murder by a Vietminh sniper

in December 1945 brought du Berner still deeper into opposition to America's arming of Ho chi Minh—an opposition that was to cost du Berner both his job with Newsweek magazine and his position as a civilian Far East specialist with SSU (Strategic Services Unit, the organization that succeeded the OSS, Office of Strategic Services).

In the years that followed there were other visits to Indochina and the little enclave of Quang-Chao-wan, where Monsieur le Prevost represented France. Du Berrier flew out of Hankow for a time when the capital was moved mland. His friend Colonel Vincent Schmidt came out from Paris to join him in late 1937 and it was this Vincent Schmidt who as commander of the then Colonel Chennault's seventh volunteer bombardment squadron raided Formosa in what was the first attack on Japanese territory.

By April 1939 du Berrier was back in Shanghai playing a dangerous game of hide and seek with the Japanese. Resting in one apartment for a time, moving to another when it began to get hot, he and his Chinese team lived in constant danger as they zig-zagged back and forth between the Shanghai international settlement and the French concession, carrying with them the underground radio which maintained contact between free China and Chiang Kai-shek's agents in Shanghai.

The Deuxieme Bureau, as French military intelligence is called, was headed in China by Captain Jean Valluy, who later became supreme commander of NATO forces, central Europe. Assisting him were captains Dumuel and Mingant as numbers two and three respectively. Captain Valluy was called back to France* for a stage at the war college, but captains Dumuel and Mingant continued to protect and warn du Berrier in his dangerous game. It was Mingant who, three days after Pearl Harbor, went

over the roofs of apartments in a shabby quarter off Bubbling Well Road and removed from du Berrier's apartment the transmitter and receiver, boxes of stick cordite (for boiling down into gelatinous cordite), bottles of distilled water, nitric acid, glycerine, and other material used in the assembling of time bombs to be used against Japanese shipping.

Most of the Americans trapped in Shanghai were businessmen. Du Berrier alone had contacts with the French military. Already he had started writing articles for America on the Japanese invasion of Indochina and massacre of the French officers who held up the Japanese advance at Dang Dong and Lanson. Not content to sit in Shanghai and wait to be rescued, du Berrier threw in with the network being formed by Captain

Mingant as a unit of the French resistance. "Reseau Mingant," as it was called, was later to operate between China and a French base in Indochina. It rescued many a downed American flyer in what was often a neck-and-neck race with the Japanese. To Mingant it brought the American Freedom Medal; to du Berrier, nothing but trouble.

He was arrested just before dawn in his Shanghai hideout on November 5, 1942. As officers of the Imperial Japanese Kampetai, the torture specialists of the Japanese service answerable only to the Japanese emperor himself, led du Berrier down the narrow stairs from his attic apartment, a Chinese furtively peered out of a doorway on the floor below. It was Mr. B. J. Yoh, head of the telecommunications bureau for Anwhei province, the man for whom the Japanese Kampetai had been searching for three years.

Along with some two hundred other allied nationals charged with espionage, du Berrier was taken to a prison camp on Haiphong Road in Shanghai and lodged in what had been the barracks of the U.S. fourth marines. Five months later, at 8:30 a.m. on April 5, 1943, Kampetai officers took him to the torture center in the former British Union Jack Club. There he was interrogated, clubbed, and given the dread "water treatment." When he was not in the torture room he was kept in a five by eight wooden cage with six other prisoners.

On learning that du Berrier was in the torture center on Myburgh Road, Captain Mingant and his men figured the game was up, and with each day that passed, their fears increased that du Berrier would break and confess.

But he did not, and with the time thus gained, Mingant was able eventually to move south into Indochina.

Du Berrier finally was moved to the makeshift hospital in Haiphong road camp late on the night of April 23. Dr. T. B. Dunn, the American doctor in the camp, prescribed a special diet of milk and eggs, which had to be bought on the black market, to build him up after the eighteen days in the torture house. When the war was over, Mr. Louis Thompson, head of the finance office of the Department of State, refused Mr. du Berrier a passport until he could repay the State Department $516 for food furnished him while a prisoner in Haiphong road camp.

Du Berrier was one of five Americans who were held as hostages by the Japanese and refused a place on the exchange list when Americans who had been trapped in the Orient were exchanged for Japanese nationals held in America.

V-J Day found du Berrier with some 250 other prisoners

held as human shields in the largest Japanese ammunition dump in China—at Feng Tai, eighteen miles out of Peking— while awaiting transportation to Japan. There an OSS parachute team led by Major Ray Nichols of Mississippi and Major Gustav Krause of Pasadena, California, liberated du Berrier about the time one of their men named John Birch was killed by the Communists only a few miles away. Through Pierre de Beaumont, a secretary in the French embassy, du Berrier got word to the American team that the Japanese were concealing four surviving members of the Doolittle raiders in pits in Peking.

This was the beginning of du Berrier’s period of employ as a civilian with OSS and his back-to-the-wall opposition to the U.S. s enthusiastic support of Ho chi Minh—an opposition that was eventually to cost him his job.

Du Berrier s next job was with Newsweek magazine. At the time, Harold R. Isaacs was head of Newsweek's Far East desk. But he had referred to Chiang Kai-shek as an s.o.b. and consequently was barred from China. Since he could not enter China, Isaacs was lauding Ho chi Minh and heaping invectives on the French in Saigon, Hanoi and Haiphong through his regular reports to Newsweek and through his free-lance articles for Harper’s.

Meanwhile, du Berrier’s old friend Valluy, by this time a general and commander of French forces in Indochina, was greeted by gunfire from the

Chinese warlord Lu Han when the transports bearing his troops neared Haiphong. Isaacs was for Ho chi Minh in the showdown that followed, and du Berrier was for General Valluy. What happened next, therefore, was no surprise: du Berrier received a telegram from Newsweek's home office stating that Mr. Robert Shaplen would arrive aboard the Marine Phoenix to take over the Shanghai bureau.

It was at this time that du Berrier began amassing his files on every actor on the Indochina scene to emerge from anonymity. Most of his information he learned from the actors themselves. He has estimated that with the same amount of money, time and effort applied in the field of medicine, he could have become a surgeon.

On January 7, 1947, du Berrier returned to his native America after a sixteen-year absence. He had $200 when he arrived in San Francisco. An army of young Americans was being dumped on the employment market, and he could neither get a job nor sell the articles that he wrote during the next

six years. Also, his passport was still blocked until he could pay for the food he ate in a Japanese prison camp.

At last, early in 1954 du Berrier's passport was temporarily unblocked on his promise that he would pay his "bill" when he was able. Later the State Department threatened to withdraw it again and in 1957 the bill was paid by Mr. Fred Champion of Los Angeles, giving du Berrier mobility once more.

War was raging in Indochina and du Berrier began making plans to return there. Mingant, by then a colonel, was back in Paris with a group that was planning to arm a Chinese force and turn over a sector of the front to General Li Tsung-jen. General Li was the warlord of Kwangtung province who for a time had oeen president of Nationalist China. The French would underwrite jJ, arm him, and back him as far as the frontier of his old province, where his name was still magic. If he could snowball his forces and reconquer the Chinese mainland, the French would wish him well. Du Berrier was the intermediary between the army group in Paris and Li Tsungjen, who was in exile in New York.

Dien Bien Phu fell before du Berrier could reach Paris, but his files on Indochina continued to swell. Premier Laniel fell and Pierre Mendes-France

concluded the long drawn out negotiations in Geneva. Du Berrier was paid by the wealthy man in Los Angeles for his letter-reports—reports which editors constantly rejected but which time after time proved to be correct. Ngo dinh Diem was named premier of South Vietnam and his brother i^uyen became his agent in Europe. Meanwhile a favorite of the powerful Madame Tran van Chuong became ambassador to France and rival of Luyen in a deadly struggle for power and money.

In April 1955 a call came for du Berrier from Luyen's office. "Will you be able to fly to Washington tonight?" asked the voice at the other end of the wire. Du Berrier did not leave that night, but he did leave the following night as "aide" to the "deputy ambassador" who was being dispatched by juuyen on a mission to undermine ambassador Lawton Collins. Two and a half months later du Berrier accompanied the Vietnamese mission to the big four conference in Geneva. As du Berrier's personal files continued to swell, storage room in his friends' homes began to diminish.

In January of 1956 du Berrier began to perceive his mistake in helping thwart General Lawton Collins' recommendations that America dump the Ngo dinhs. The rumor has been circulated that du Berrier was dropped by Diem and consequently

was out for revenge in his withdrawing of support for Diem. Nothing could be further from the truth. It should be clear to anyone even vaguely familiar with the vanity of dictators and the methods of public relations hucksters that had du Berrier been interested in high living he could have become a rich man feeding the insatiable Diem and his American press glowing stories of "our man's" miracles in South Vietnam.

Instead, because the market for honest reports was limited to one or two small publications in America, du Berrier and Mrs. Doris A. Parks, of Los Angeles, launched their H. du B. Reports—a private intelligence letter for the American who buys newspapers and newsmagazines and in them gets propaganda in lieu of news.

One might say that this book began when Japanese officers confined du Berrier's French friends to their quarters in Dang Dong and Lanson on the eve of World War II and threw handgrenades in on them. It was spurred on when valiant young de Riencourt was shot down in December 1945 by a Vietminh sniper as de Riencourt was bathing in a river. The day an OSS

major threw aside a report from du Berrier on General Philip E. Gallagher's transporting of Ho chi Minh's protege to Shanghai—where this protege incited a revolt among French troops from Indochina—this book was given another push. "The French are bitching again," was the major's only comment. In his pocket was a gold cigarette case engraved, 'To my good friend, Major B from Ho chi

Minh."

The first chapter of this book was actually drafted the day after a foreign service employee in the American embassy in Paris boasted that he would "get" du Berrier's passport because of a du Berrier article published in the Economic Council Letter of December 1, 1957 (published by the National Economic Council of New York).

When du Berrier's passport renewal was blocked in the spring of 1959 and he learned of the smear file compiled against him, the necessity of making this book both complete and unassailable became a holy mission.

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